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General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 26 September 2007, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.20 a.m.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Zatlers: I wish to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Kerim, on your assumption of the post of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. Your wise and energetic leadership will reflect the abilities of the people of your country and of our region as a whole. I also wish to congratulate and extend my best wishes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and to pledge him my full support. It is evident that the Secretary-General recognizes the multitude of challenges the world is facing today. Only two days ago, I took part in the high-level meeting on climate change here at the United Nations. That meeting was organized by the Secretary-General to highlight the urgent need for decisions that will prevent long-term negative consequences. Now we must all work together towards achieving a satisfactory outcome to the Bali Conference, which is to be held at the end of this year.

I welcome the fact that the Security Council was able to adopt the groundbreaking resolution 1769 (2007), which authorized the deployment of the Hybrid Operation in Darfur. It is now imperative that the resolution be translated into reality. We all recognize the difficulties involved. It is also imperative to continue the political process. Only a negotiated solution has the potential to bring sustainable peace to that long-suffering region.

To a great extent, the stability and prosperity of Iraq depend on support from its region. We therefore welcome the fact that the Security Council could unite to adopt resolution 1770 (2007). That resolution gives a renewed and strengthened mandate to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. With the launch of the International Compact with Iraq, last May, the world community now possesses an effective instrument for rendering further assistance to the areas in Iraq where it is most needed. The Compact has already been used to achieve positive results. We encourage the Government of Iraq to continue to take steps towards promoting economic reform and achieving peace and stability for its people.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I visited Afghanistan. I had a chance to meet with President Karzai, representatives of the Afghan Government, Latvian troops and civilian experts. The message from all those meetings was clear. Providing assistance through the International Security Assistance Force is just one side

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of the coin; the other entails contributing to building a solid foundation for the country's sustainable development.

Latvia is present in Afghanistan as part of both the international military and the civilian rebuilding effort. Latvia's Government is contributing financially to the reconstruction of infrastructure in Afghanistan. However, it is my strong conviction that the key to success in Afghanistan is cooperation — cooperation among countries and international organizations. To succeed, the European Union, the United Nations, NATO and others must adopt a comprehensive, long-term approach to development assistance for the country.

In the Middle East, the past year has brought no significant breakthrough. Yet, we continue to place our trust in the work of the Quartet, which supports the efforts of responsible regional States in helping to calm the situation. It is a crucial tool to promote a negotiated, comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in line with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. I am sure that the Quartet's newly appointed Special Envoy will use his great experience and make sincere efforts to fulfil his challenging mandate.

The international community is currently also seized of the matter regarding the final status of Kosovo. The Secretary-General has endorsed the Comprehensive Proposal of his Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari. The Proposal currently remains the only viable diplomatic solution on the table. The active involvement of the European Union is important to achieve a lasting solution. We urge both parties to show flexibility and commitment to a peaceful negotiated outcome. We sincerely hope that the ongoing talks under the auspices of the Contact Group troika will result in success.

In my previous capacity as a surgeon, I performed many operations. But I also closely followed the recovery process of every one of my patients. I ensured that they got the necessary post-operative treatment and encouraged them to maintain healthy habits. In that phase I had to rely heavily on the work of my able and dedicated team. Likewise, it is not enough for the Security Council to prescribe peacekeeping operations, crucial as they are for international peace and security. The whole United Nations system is necessary for the long-term recovery of conflict zones.

In that regard, I would like to pay special tribute to the peacekeepers and to the United Nations staff working in difficult conditions on the ground. It is our duty in our capitals, and here at United Nations Headquarters, to support their efforts, each Member State according to its capacity. At the same time, we expect high standards in peacekeeping forces.

For many decades, Latvia suffered extensively from foreign occupation. Now that we have regained our freedom, we hope to prevent the suffering of others. We wish to promote the healing process. The international community must bring to justice those who have committed war crimes and massive violations of human rights. Latvia commends the work of the International Criminal Court. We have placed our hopes in the Peacebuilding Commission — that it will be an effective tool for consolidating long-term peace.

Even where military conflict is not a factor, human security in many parts of the world is undermined by poverty, hunger and disease. The 2007 *Millennium Development Goals* Report gave us some good news. However, it warned us that the Goals will not be achieved by the year 2015 — certainly not in sub-Saharan Africa — unless our efforts are scaled up. Latvia therefore supports the call to review progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and accelerate action.

Latvia is a candidate in the 2010 elections for the Economic and Social Council. We have know-how to share, and we also have empathy for the pain that reforms may cause. As an emerging donor, we have undertaken commitments in the area of overseas development assistance. We believe that our recent intensive and successful experience in development will be an asset to the work of the Council.

Latvia has a strong commitment to multilateralism and the values embodied in the Charter of the United Nations. We want to see an Organization that embodies effectiveness, efficiency and authority. It is regrettable that the reform process launched at the 2005 World Summit has been slow and uneven. We recognize the forces that make the reform so difficult, but we must not give in to fatigue and frustration. Management reform is vital. I already mentioned the dire necessity for a comprehensive approach among the

different international players on the ground. Likewise, there is a great need for system-wide coherence of the various United Nations funds and programmes. The provision of aid should be targeted and efficient. Our focus should be on those in need. We look forward to assessing the results of the "One UN" pilot programme, which is now under way in eight volunteer countries.

The beginnings of the new Human Rights Council were a cause for concern. Still, we are confident that after making important decisions on institution-building earlier this year, Member States will take full advantage of the Human Rights Council. We have to live up to our task to further promote and protect human rights. The Council now has the tools, but it will be up to Member States to use those tools. It will be up to Member States to advance the credibility of the United Nations as an Organization able and willing to protect and promote human rights.

Latvia has always placed the promotion of human rights among its top priorities. In the light of that commitment, we have decided to aim for membership in the Human Rights Council in the 2014 elections.

No reform will be more difficult or more significant than that of the Security Council. The Security Council has had many achievements. However, we share the widespread belief that the composition and the working methods of the Council need to be brought up to date. We have stated many times our reasons for supporting the model of reform being promoted by the G4 nations, namely, Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan. We consider it to be the best of the models currently available. We welcome the prospect of intergovernmental negotiations beginning in the current session and hope that they will produce early positive results.

The United Nations is as important as ever, being the only truly universal forum for global dialogue. We must not forget that it is also the only truly universal forum for decision-making and action. But above all, we must emphasize that this is the forum where all States, big and small, have a voice. This is also a forum where all States have a responsibility to contribute.

Latvia looks forward to a fruitful sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of the Swiss Confederation

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of the Swiss Confederation, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Calmy-Rey (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Sir, I should like to congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly, and to assure you of my country's full support during the sixty-second session.

All of us here share the hope for a more peaceful and harmonious world. At a time when civilian populations are the targets of suicide attacks and sophisticated weapons, when children are forced to become soldiers, and climate change poses a threat to the survival of our planet, how are we meeting our responsibilities? Where does the responsibility lie when millions of men and women are suffering from malnutrition and their most basic needs are not being met, when injustice is everywhere, and when the environment is being destroyed? How can we overcome those scourges assailing human beings throughout the world? How can we translate our responsibilities into action?

In attempting to answer those questions, we have to acknowledge two facts. The first is that respect for human rights, the rule of law and good governance are the prerequisites both to achieving lasting peace and security and to protecting the environment. We know now that systematic violations of human rights and flagrant deficiencies in the rule of law are often the source of conflicts. The second concerns the nature of

conflicts. On the ground, battle lines are being blurred. State forces are confronting non-State armed groups. Warlords, terrorists and criminal gangs dictate the rules. Civilians rather than soldiers are the primary targets.

It is no longer possible to limit security policy to the traditional State framework. The focus now must be first and foremost on the security of the individual. Accordingly, Governments and non-State armed groups alike are called on to respect certain basic rules common to all.

If we are to achieve results, confrontation must give way to dialogue and efforts to find solutions. Negotiation, dialogue and diplomacy are the tools for achieving success. We must overcome the barriers that exist between different sectors and disciplines in the field of international relations. We must develop alliances based on shared values. That approach should enable us to find solutions by cutting across regional, ideological and cultural boundaries. The recent past has shown what can be achieved. The International Criminal Court, the Human Rights Council and the Anti-personnel Landmines Convention were all the result of broad-based coalitions of countries in all regions of the world.

However, dialogue alone will not be enough. Experience has shown that, without concrete objectives, debates between players with very different views of the world can sometimes serve to accentuate differences. In contrast, efforts to devise and implement actions that are concrete and practical make for cohabitation between different communities. It is for that reason that Switzerland supports such initiatives as the Alliance of Civilizations, along with the implementation plan proposed by the secretariat of the Alliance.

Coherent overall solutions to the crises that are currently affecting the international order cannot be implemented unless we take into account the interests of all the communities concerned. Switzerland does all it can to promote dialogue with all parties. That is particularly the case in Lebanon, where we are offering the political forces a forum in which to seek a way out of the current political crisis in the interest of long-term stability.

Recent developments in the occupied Palestinian territories have reminded us once again, with tragic intensity, of the need to respect those principles. In that regard as well, the involvement of all parties is necessary if there is to be a lasting solution.

The same can be said for the situation in Darfur. My country hopes that resolution 1769 (2007), which for the first time envisages close cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, will provide the inhabitants of that region with an opportunity to live in peace and to achieve reconciliation after so many years of suffering.

The situation in Myanmar is alarming. Switzerland calls on the Government of Myanmar to renounce all forms of violence against demonstrators and civilians. Switzerland favours dialogue among all the parties concerned, under the aegis of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General.

Lastly, there can be no peace or security without international justice. Switzerland supports in particular the work of the International Criminal Court. Its permanent nature and the possibility of the Security Council referring situations to the Court — as it did in the case of Darfur — gives that institution a preventive effect. For that effect to be achieved, the Court must have the full support of the international community, which must ensure that all States cooperate fully with the Court.

Human security policy also applies to environmental threats. The actions of humankind have changed the climate of the planet. Those changes are taking place on a global scale and are resulting in rising temperatures, radical changes in precipitation patterns, rising sea levels and a disruption to the balance of nature. Taken as a whole, those phenomena pose a major threat to millions of people and the places where people live, their cultures and their living conditions. The risks to security, health and development are discussed in the *Fourth Assessment Report* of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Today environmental problems are a threat to security. At the political level, they require that we act responsibly as human beings. They also require the forming of alliances to protect our natural resources. Although we have established institutions and international mechanisms to combat underdevelopment and promote peace and respect for human rights, we have not done enough with regard to the environment. It is true that we have a series of international conventions and national programmes and legislation.

But environmental governance is fragmented and lacks clear objectives. We therefore need to join together to identify and implement commitments in order to better manage resources and efforts and to protect the biosphere. We also need to mobilize the United Nations system in order to respond to climate change effectively and coherently.

Switzerland therefore hopes that we will set ambitious goals for ourselves in the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol. We are ready to make a substantial contribution to that collective effort, in which the entire international community must join. Switzerland believes that, in order to have legitimacy, any future international regime to address climate change will require the participation of all countries. In our view, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Changes and the Kyoto Protocol provide the most appropriate starting points for all deliberations and negotiations on climate change.

Addressing the economic, social and environmental aspects of development based on respect for human rights is both a challenge and a goal for all of us as we seek to build a world that is both freer and more secure. The international community has adopted many development goals in recent decades. However, additional efforts must still be made to ensure greater coherence in the operational system of the United Nations. With its funds, programmes and specialized agencies, the system has at its disposal an excellent network through which to ensure its presence on the ground. It also has great moral and technical legitimacy and substantial operational capacity.

Unfortunately the system remains fragmented and its transaction costs are very high — costs which are to a great extent borne by beneficiary countries themselves. Major adjustments — some of which are described in the report entitled "Delivering as One" — need to be carried out promptly in the field so that United Nations operational bodies can meet the needs of partner countries more effectively. Negotiations on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, which are due to begin in a few weeks, will provide the appropriate framework to determine what measures are needed — especially on the basis of the experiences of pilot countries that are applying the concept of "One United Nations".

We stand today at the midpoint of the timetable for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Although there is no denying that progress has been made at various levels, there is still much to be done. All of us — Governments, multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector — must combine our efforts across a wide front that encompasses the national, regional and international spheres. Given the upcoming high-level dialogue on financing for development, I shall limit myself merely to recalling that all of us have a common interest in improving the efficiency and the impact of development assistance and in increasing the volume of resources made available for it through official channels. We already know that results in this area can only be achieved through very considerable joint efforts by all partners concerned.

The Organization has begun a process of reform in order to better respond to global challenges. So as to strengthen the credibility and efficiency of the efforts of the United Nations, we must demonstrate our determination to fully carry out those reforms. There was real progress in the past year, including the beginning of the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. That illustrates the ability of the United Nations to carry out ambitious reforms in order to respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Switzerland is advocating for an overall improvement in the working methods of the Security Council. My country will continue its efforts to improve transparency in sanctions committees and to ensure that the addition and removal of names of persons and entities on sanctions lists are in conformity with the principles of the rule of law and human rights.

Efficient management and a better targeted use of available resources continue to pose a serious challenge for the Organization. Switzerland welcomes the determination of the Secretary-General to make the efficiency of the United Nations system one of his priorities. Given the progress made this year, but especially because of the challenges that remain, Switzerland believes that it is essential to continue the process of reform already under way. My country will therefore continue to support the efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon aimed at strengthening the United Nations and making the Organization more efficient.

If we want to move ahead, if we are determined to overcome the varied and interdependent challenges facing the globalized world of today, and if we want to free individual human beings from fear and want, we must focus on concrete objectives. To that end, let us resolve to work tirelessly to overcome our differences in the interest of the nations and peoples we represent.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Swiss Confederation for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted from the General Assembly.

Address by Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ould Cheikh Abdellahi (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. We have every confidence in your efforts to strengthen peace within a global system characterized by justice, balance and stability.

I would also like to congratulate your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, on her successful efforts to advance debate and dialogue on the main concerns and problems of our day.

I also wish to congratulate and thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who, from the day he took office, began to promote the reform of the Organization, in addition to addressing international peace and security issues.

Allow me, in particular, to welcome the fact that the General Assembly at its sixty-first session focused on development issues, together with the fight against poverty, the adverse effects of climate change, economic globalization, promoting dialogue and understanding between civilizations and religions, introducing modern good governance systems, and the consolidation of democracy.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which is an urgent priority, requires that we all intensify our efforts and promote cooperation and coordination so as to establish conditions conducive to sustainable, comprehensive and balanced development.

We believe that encouraging the spirit and values of understanding, dialogue and complementarity between civilizations and nations, upholding the rule of law, and expanding justice and equity are the speediest way to ensure peace and security in the world and eradicate hatred and confrontation between peoples. The continuation of seemingly intractable problems, the widening of the gap between rich and poor, the existence of structural dysfunctions in the global economy, the absence of justice, and the prevalence of injustice and despair are factors that perpetuate pockets of tension and conflict and encourage extremism and terrorism.

We in Mauritania have rejected terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We strongly condemn it and, at the same time, we continue to adhere to Islamic values in our society — which are based on tolerance and the rejection of violence and extremism and call for understanding and brotherhood.

Under the Charter of the United Nations we are committed to join efforts to maintain international peace and security. That commitment continues to be undermined by conflict situations, some of which have persisted since the founding of the Organization. The Arab-Israeli conflict is undeniably the one that generates the most antagonism and most threatens international peace and security. That conflict continues despite the fact that the framework setting out the general conditions for a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the conflict has been defined and reaffirmed over the years by the Security Council and the General Assembly. Those basic requirements constitute the very essence of the Arab Peace Initiative. That Initiative guarantees peace, security and the recognition of the State of Israel by Arab countries in

exchange for an end to the occupation of Arab territories and an agreement to seek out mutually acceptable solutions for other outstanding issues. Israel must seize this historic opportunity and subsequently comply with international law so that the peoples of the region can at last live in peace — and in particular so that the Palestinian people can regain their usurped rights and be able to establish an independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Mauritania is of course following closely the issue of the Western Sahara. We are pleased with the recent steps that have led to the resumption of direct negotiations. We reiterate our support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to find a definitive solution acceptable to all parties that guarantees stability in the region.

With regard to Darfur, we are pleased about the agreement reached between the Government of the Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations. We hope that all parties will join efforts to ensure that peace, understanding and accord prevail as soon as possible among our Sudanese brothers and sisters.

As for the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, we were pleased to note the remarkable progress made on the path towards civic peace in the country. We hope that overall stability will prevail in that brotherly country and that it will once again assume its rightful place in the West African subregion and in the continent as a whole.

The African Union, working with the United Nations, is making intensive efforts to resolve the crises on the African continent. However, social and economic progress undoubtedly offers the best solution to those conflicts. Africa's share of the world economy has declined in the past two decades. The continent now lags behind in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Yet, there are real signs of improvement in the situation on the continent. New economic opportunities now exist, thanks in large part to the growing demand for emerging markets, but Africa still needs further official development assistance and greater flows of foreign direct investment. I should like to point out that African countries are of course primarily responsible for their own development. They must also ensure the rule of law, promote good governance and establish a framework conducive to direct foreign investment.

This year, we in Mauritania improved the democratic process by establishing a pluralistic system based on a Constitution that guarantees the right of the peaceful transfer of power. Our country has therefore undergone a major democratic transformation. We have done so through presidential elections conducted in an atmosphere of transparency, honesty and open competition — as was noted by national and international observers, including the United Nations, the European Union, the League of Arab States, the African Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. In the same atmosphere of freedom and pluralism, municipal and legislative elections made it possible to choose the representatives of the people to municipal councils and the two houses of Parliament. We paid particular attention to Mauritania's women in both elections, with 20 per cent of contested seats reserved for them. As a result, women are now more represented than ever in the legislative and executive branches, as well as in local administration, diplomacy and management.

Moreover, my Government has made sustained efforts to strengthen national unity and to ensure transparency in the management of public affairs. Among other things, those efforts have led to steps to secure the dignified return of Mauritanian refugees residing in Senegal and Mali, so as to usher in a new era of brotherhood and national reconciliation in our country.

In the same vein, we have enacted a law criminalizing slavery. A high court of justice was also established in order, if necessary, to prosecute the president of the country and senior Government officials through an integral procedure that aims at institutionalizing the norms of good governance, modernizing institutions and strengthening the oversight mechanism through greater and direct participation by the representatives of the people and of civil society. We are more determined than ever to persevere along this path because we believe it is the best way to strengthen national unity and achieve development, security, stability and prosperity for the nation and for our citizens.

Mauritania is resolutely committed to contributing to relations of cooperation and solidarity in our region, in accordance with the ambitions and aspirations of our people. In this framework, our faith in the Arab Maghreb Union as a strategic choice for the

region and our faith in the Arab League and the African Union are unwavering, given our firm commitment to the spirit of fraternity and solidarity and to relations of cooperation, friendship and good neighbourliness that link our country to its Arab and African environment. At the same time, our country remains determined to strengthen the bases of dialogue, exchange and understanding between peoples and civilizations, namely within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue.

Mauritania reiterates its commitment to the ideals and purposes of the United Nations, the only multilateral framework at the service of humanity as a whole. Faced with the multiple challenges and threats in today's world, it is our common duty to make the United Nations a melting pot where we can harmonize our efforts to implement the priorities stated in the Millennium Declaration and at various international conferences. In a globalized world marked by the accumulation of wealth and an unprecedented acceleration of technological and scientific progress, it is up to us to benefit equitably from the possibilities that are offered to all peoples and to establish the best living conditions coupled with greater freedom. We took this commitment when we created the United Nations more than 60 years ago. Today we have the means to assume our responsibilities and to uphold this often reiterated commitment.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Finland.

Mrs. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Halonen: I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and express our support for your leadership of the General Assembly at this session. Finland aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals continue to serve as our common pledge to create a better future for everyone. The United Nations is our world organization, and in addressing global challenges, the United Nations is the key forum for our cooperation.

In order to achieve comprehensive security, we must strive not only for security, but also for development and human rights. In the World Summit two years ago, we decided that the United Nations system should be reformed to better ensure the implementation of these three fundamental principles. We should spare no efforts to continue the overall reform of the United Nations.

A more just world is a safer world. Making the Economic and Social Council more effective is an important part of the United Nations reform and of the concept of broad security.

Establishing a new United Nations institution is truly a challenging task. We know that from our own experience. Finland was a member of the Human Rights Council during its first year. But we have to go on. We must sustain our efforts to make the Council a credible institution, capable of defending and promoting globally the human rights of women, men and children. Our good words and intentions must lead to strong action.

The new Peacebuilding Commission must be developed into a platform that can successfully assist countries struggling in post-conflict situations. To support that work, Governments, parliaments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector must also work together. The Peacebuilding Fund must be used as an effective tool to respond to the immediate needs of post-conflict countries.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals calls for coherent action. Finland strongly supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence. The objective

of One United Nations at the country level is worth striving for.

We also must reinforce our efforts to address the challenges in the fields of health and education, as so many speakers have mentioned here.

Finland warmly welcomes the Panel's recommendations concerning gender. We do need to take decisive measures to promote gender awareness across the entire United Nations system. We support the proposal to set up a new, consolidated gender agency with a new Under-Secretary-General position at its head.

In this context, I would like to stress the importance of engaging women in all phases of crisis management: conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, without forgetting peace talks. Let me give one example: the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Middle East Initiative. I believe that the cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian women under this initiative can help to restart the peace negotiations. I also use this opportunity to state that Finland is preparing its national action plan to advance the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

A stronger United Nations also needs reform of the Secretariat. In this regard, we welcome the additional emphasis given to the rule of law. Support for the rule of law is a necessity in the consolidation of global security.

Sustainable development requires us to consistently promote fairer globalization and the well-being of nature. Climate change affects the future of the whole of mankind. Finland highlights the necessity to reach, as soon as possible, a globally inclusive agreement on the post-2012 climate regime. The United Nations has a central role to play in this process.

Every nation has the right to develop and to aim for growth and prosperity. Industrialized countries must demonstrate solidarity with developing countries and take all possible steps to promote access to environmentally sound technologies for everyone.

I believe that the tone of the climate change debate is developing in a promising direction. Many Member States and various regions and social actors have become active and have produced initiatives concerning the development of climate policy. We have to take advantage of that as an asset in the run-up to the Bali Climate Change Conference, to be held in December.

The high-level event on climate change held on 24 September was a success. I feel that it gave us the political support that we will need when we are heading towards Bali. Everyone's input will, of course, be required. Finland appreciates the fact that the President of the General Assembly has made this topic one of his priorities.

We need effective international cooperation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. For example, given the number of victims in today's conflicts, small arms and light weapons are indeed weapons of mass destruction. Finland, together with more than 150 other States, supports the process aimed at the adoption of an international arms trade treaty.

The role of the United Nations is vital in resolving numerous crises around the world. This morning, we heard news from Burma/Myanmar, where the people's fight for freedom and human rights has been suppressed. We must react. United Nations activities need political support and our resources.

We value the determination of the Secretary-General in searching for a solution to the crisis in the Sudan. The new peacekeeping operation in Darfur will increase the total number of United Nations troops to more than 100,000. That remarkable figure proves that the United Nations enjoys the trust of the international community. We welcome Security Council resolution 1778 (2007), adopted yesterday, on an international presence in Chad and the Central African Republic.

In order to achieve success in crisis management, we need partnerships and shared responsibilities. For example, the African Union and the European Union have been valuable partners of the United Nations. The support of local and regional actors is critical for successful United Nations peacekeeping.

We Europeans believe that resolving Kosovo's status is vitally important. In that process, the United Nations Special Envoy has played a pivotal role. We encourage all parties to engage constructively in finding a solution to that problem.

Let me assure the Assembly that Finland supports a stronger United Nations for a better world. It is up to us to deliver on our commitments to achieving better

security, sustainable development and respect for the human rights of all people. I wish to express our firmest support to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in pursuing such efforts.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Finland for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, President of Turkmenistan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Turkmenistan.

Mr. Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, President of Turkmenistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, President of Turkmenistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Berdymukhammedov (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the people and the Government of Turkmenistan, I wish to express my good wishes to all members and to congratulate them on the beginning of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his election to the post of Secretary-General and to wish him every success in discharging his challenging responsibilities.

I should also like to congratulate Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election to the presidency of the Assembly. I am certain that under his guidance, the work of the Assembly will be effective and fruitful.

Since the very first days of its independence, Turkmenistan has considered the ideals of the United Nations to be fully in accordance with our aspirations in terms of relations with the international community. The basic principles of the Organization — the maintenance of peace, equality of rights, respect for the sovereignty of all States and their right to choose their own path of development — formed the basis for our country's foreign policy, in which cooperation with the United Nations has become a priority area.

Time has proved that the choice made by our country was right and well founded. In 15 years of intense cooperation with the United Nations, Turkmenistan has found its own place in the international arena and has gained invaluable experience in interacting with the world community and developing harmonious, equal and mutually respectful relations with other nations. We have every right to be proud of the fact that it was within these walls that resolution 50/80 [A], on the permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan, was adopted on 12 December 1995 — a historic event for our country. It is not an exaggeration to say that the resolution on neutrality has become the foundation of our foreign policy and has played a major role in shaping our national policy.

Cooperation with the United Nations will continue to drive our foreign policy. Here, I should like to emphasize that such cooperation enriches our bilateral and multilateral ties and makes them more meaningful. That is most apparent in regional matters, where the participation of the United Nations and its specialized agencies promotes convergence of States' approaches to issues, thus creating a favourable political, diplomatic and legal environment for their resolution through concerted effort.

In that context, I consider the recent decision to establish a United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia to be a major milestone. I am confident that the inauguration of the Centre, set for the end of the year, will mark an entirely new phase in the efforts of our country and our neighbours to ensure peace, security and stability in the region.

Turkmenistan is fully prepared to engage in constructive and fruitful cooperation with the Centre. We are certain that its work will be a strong and positive force in resolving the problems faced by our region. We highly appreciate the decision to establish the Centre in Ashgabat, capital of neutral Turkmenistan. We see that as an expression of the Organization's confidence in our country. Mindful of our great responsibility, I assure the Assembly that our country will do everything necessary to make the Centre's work effective and fruitful.

Notwithstanding current changes in the world, the great humanist ideals of the United Nations and the principles of its Charter should continue to serve as the

moral and legal pillar of the international order. Only on this basis can the issues of United Nations reform be considered. United Nations reform as a whole should be meaningful and goal-oriented and correspond to the objective realities of the age. In this respect, Turkmenistan supports the efforts of the United Nations Member States and the Secretary-General to make the work of the Organization more dynamic, efficient, transparent and democratic.

In that context, Turkmenistan shares the view that it is necessary to improve further the structure of the Security Council and to develop closer and more effective interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly. We are in favour of reforming the United Nations, making it stronger, enhancing its work and expanding the role and functions of the Security Council as a guarantor of international peace, security and stability.

Turkmenistan's neutral status, its foreign policy doctrine of non-affiliation with any blocs and its rejection of the use of force as a means of resolving international disputes predetermine our stance with regard to the issues of peace and security. In this context, Turkmenistan fully supports international efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related technologies. Accordingly, Turkmenistan has been taking and will continue to take consistent practical steps to ensure implementation of the international legal framework on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In its legislation, Turkmenistan proclaims its refusal to possess, manufacture, store or transport nuclear, chemical, bacteriological and other types of weapons of mass destruction or related technologies. In 2005, the People's Council of Turkmenistan decided to adopt a Statement on Supporting the Initiatives of International Organizations to Combat the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Last year, in Semipalatinsk, Turkmenistan, together with other States of the region, signed the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia. That document is unique in many ways, since, for the first time since the Second World War, it proclaims the establishment of a vast region free of nuclear weapons on the map of the northern hemisphere. It is noteworthy that our joint initiative echoes the aspirations of the majority of countries and that it has been highly acclaimed by the international community and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly. Let me take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all States, international and regional organizations that have supported the document.

However, we need to realize that Central Asia is not isolated. Our region has thousands of historical, ethnic and humanitarian ties with neighbouring States. In this context, Turkmenistan's concern with the events in Afghanistan is justified. We rejoice at the success of the Afghan people in building a peaceful life; we feel the difficulties they face as our own. Turkmenistan is assisting Afghanistan in rebuilding its economy, by providing professional training, in the construction of social facilities and by providing oil and power to some provinces of the country. Together with the international community, and with the United Nations, we are striving to help achieve stability for Afghanistan and to help the brotherly people of that country to achieve peace and well-being.

Geographically, Turkmenistan is conveniently located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Over its years of independence, our country has built a modern transportation and communication infrastructure. As an important element of international trade and economic relations, it may also become a factor leading to significant revitalization and further development of cultural interaction between the regions, thus promoting rapprochement and mutual understanding between nations. It is in that spirit that Turkmenistan defines its international energy strategy, aimed at developing a multiple pipeline system to bring Turkmen energy resources to international markets on a stable and long-term basis. This strategy is not dependent on either political circumstances or any kind of ideological bias. Our stand on this matter is a stand of principle and full transparency. We support the implementation of economically justified pipeline projects that would guarantee security, including environmental safety. That will determine their multi-track character. In this context, Turkmenistan is in favour of the mutually advantageous use of energy resources by both exporters and consumers.

From this point of view, we are convinced that the implementation of projects aimed at bringing Turkmen energy to international markets will provide another impulse to stimulate inter-State and interregional trade and economic relations. That will also serve to promote further economic growth in the countries where pipelines run and assist in the

resolution of issues relating to the provision of light and heat, the development of production and social infrastructure and job creation, which will, ultimately, have a positive effect on the overall political climate within and beyond the region.

Turkmenistan is taking very seriously the issue of environmental protection and a whole range of other issues that will have to be addressed by engaging the capacity of the international community at large. In this context, we support the efforts of the Secretary-General to promote and develop broad international cooperation, with a view to finding a comprehensive solution to this global problem. To that end, Turkmenistan is taking specific steps at the national level. Up to 200 million dollars are annually earmarked in the national budget for environmental protection. Our country has passed legislation setting standards to prevent environmental pollution, and it is introducing technologies to ensure environmental safety of our key sector, the oil and gas industry. Already for over 10 years, Turkmenistan has been implementing a large-scale nation-wide programme entitled "The Green Belt", which has resulted in millions of trees being planted on thousands of hectares all over the country.

We are fully committed to the goals of the Kyoto Protocol, and we are ready to cooperate with all international partners in implementing its provisions.

As a full-fledged member of the international community, Turkmenistan is developing a genuinely democratic and legal foundation for its national statehood. The greatest value of our society is the individual, and his or her rights and freedoms. Today, this is at the centre of our State policy.

Processes aimed at the further democratization of public and political life, the establishment of civil society, the introduction of modern electoral mechanisms and the formation of local government bodies are gaining momentum. A constructive innovative search for a reasonable balance between the authority of the State and society at large is under way. We are not trying to speed up the process, and we are not pushing it into some artificial time frame. The most important thing is that it has become irreversible and is receiving recognition and support both within and outside the country. And, in this respect, we highly appreciate the assistance provided to us by international organizations in general and by the United Nations in particular.

Today, Turkmenistan is open to the world; it is open to broad-scale partnership in all areas of activity. Together with the rest of the community of nations, our country is ready to work further to promote the principles of international law and the ideals of humanism, justice, tolerance and mutual respect as determinant factors in modern relations among States.

The status of permanent neutrality not only imposes on our country important foreign policy obligations but also obliges us to shape our foreign and social policies accordingly. In that context, I would like to emphasize that Turkmenistan's neutrality is irreversible and that our commitment to the resultant international obligations is firm. We intend to follow this path with resolve, and we will always be open to international cooperation promoting implementation of the strategic priorities of the community of nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Turkmenistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, President of Turkmenistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Adamkus: It is always inspiring to come to this forum and, time and again, observe that there are many more things that unite rather than divide nations around the globe. Indeed, we are united in our vision of a world free of violence, where every individual has freedom of choice and where human dignity is respected. We are united in our aspirations to

meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, because we know that in a globalized world a threat to one nation is a threat to all nations.

Nowhere is this new reality more evident than in the much-needed work of the United Nations. Poverty, imbalances in development, armaments, the spread of ideologies of hatred, cybercrime: those are some of the threats that we face today. The new, daunting challenges are different in kind. Therefore, both individual States and the international community have to find ways to deal with this new reality and how to respond better to new challenges.

Seven years ago, at this United Nations conclave, all nations made a historic step, pledging to eradicate poverty, illiteracy and environmental degradation, and to improve health and promote gender equality. That was our response to the challenges of the time. This year, we are halfway to the 2015 deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Over the past few years, an estimated 135 million people managed to get out of extreme poverty. Significant positive changes are taking place in the fields of primary education for poor children, child vaccination and better access to retroviral treatment for persons with HIV/AIDS, to name but a few.

Yet overall progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals remains uneven and too slow. If we want to live up to our commitments, we must increase our efforts considerably and urgently.

The twenty-first century has also confronted us with such challenges as a deteriorating environment. Global warming affects all aspects of our lives from social and economic growth to changing habitats and migration patterns. Time is clearly not on our side. We are taking measures to adapt our policies to counter climate change, but our actions are obviously too slow and sometimes too reluctant. Therefore, Lithuania welcomes the Secretary-General's focus on climate change as a global challenge that requires global concerted efforts. We believe that the United Nations climate change process is the appropriate forum for negotiating future global action in this effort.

But that already may not be enough. I am convinced that the world needs a more coherent and inclusive system of international environmental governance. This system needs to be strengthened by establishing a United Nations Environment Organization, based on the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with a revised mandate. With December's Bali climate change conference in mind, I call on all countries to come to the negotiating table later this year with the ambition of concluding by 2009 a global and comprehensive post-2012 agreement. Before such an agreement is reached, Lithuania is doing its best to fulfil the commitment of the European Union to achieve at least a 20 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 compared to 1990 levels.

We have started to focus on a wider use of indigenous and renewable energy resources. The share of these resources in the primary energy balance in Lithuania will increase up to 12 per cent by the year 2010. Last year alone, we planted 21,000 hectares of trees, an area that corresponds to 32,000 soccer fields. For a country the size of Lithuania, that is no small measure. These are but a few of the concrete steps by which my country shows political will sufficient to fight new global challenges.

The necessity to fit in and effectively integrate into the international system has been the cornerstone of our policies since we regained our independence in 1990. Membership in the European Union and NATO is the best example of success in that effort. Now we are taking on increasing responsibility in the fields of security, stability and sustainability in our region and beyond. We are active at the front of the war against terrorism, including our contribution to restoring stability and security in Iraq. We are leading a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan's Ghor province. Over the past two years, Lithuania has doubled its development aid budget and has committed to increasing it to 0.33 per cent of its gross national income by 2015. Our contribution to global security and the vision of inclusiveness and of building a "Europe whole and free" motivated Lithuania to offer its candidacy for the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2010.

If Lithuania and the Baltic region in general are a success story in terms of establishing themselves in a new global environment, some countries in our region are not. We may only guess why those countries perceive the integration of democracies on their borders as a national threat. We feel sorry for a society at large when its Government chooses to spend the country's natural riches on guns and not on democratic reforms. Clearly, we should not tolerate attempts to falsify historical facts about the Soviet occupation of

the Baltic States or the denial of the deliberately caused *Holodomor* in Ukraine, which killed millions.

Fitting in is never easy. Therefore, we consider that the United Nations could help Member States to efficiently integrate into the international system, as the European Union is already doing by engaging its neighbours in this process through various neighbourhood instruments and cooperation formats.

However, our readiness to stand up and speak openly to States if they cross the line is also an indispensable element of that effort. We should ask ourselves: where did we fail, that the killings of hundreds of thousands of innocent people were permitted to take place in Darfur?

Today conflicts occur on every continent, with particularly grave consequences in Africa and the Middle East. Some conflicts in the world, however, are less visible. But that does not make them less dangerous. Frozen conflicts in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus may become very hot one day unless we act immediately. We consider it morally unacceptable for the international community to remain indifferent to the frozen conflicts in the GUAM area. Let us not forget that it is not only the conflicts that are frozen; the lives and dreams of the people living in those areas of artificial conflict are also frozen. That is where the United Nations should be more visible and more outspoken. That also applies to Kosovo, where attempts to create another frozen conflict must be excluded.

It is not only States, but also the United Nations itself that must adapt to new, changing realities. We encourage the Secretary-General to continue the reform of the United Nations, in particular making the Organization's operational system more consolidated, coherent and effective, with the highest standards of conduct and ethics. We must proceed with real actions in carrying through the reform of the United Nations. The Secretary-General has my full support in this context. He should be applauded for his bold and forward-thinking vision of the reform in United Nations peacekeeping. We welcome all efforts by the United Nations to streamline and reform the peacekeeping procurement system.

I encourage the United Nations to further strengthen, develop and use its capabilities in the area of good offices and conflict prevention, as envisioned in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1). That would enable us to address many issues in a more efficient manner and, hopefully, to avoid costly peacekeeping operations.

The prevention of nuclear proliferation and the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons are crucial for global peace and security. We need to strengthen the authority of the Treaty. Lithuania will support the process leading to the elaboration of a binding international arms trade treaty. Lithuania will also continue to increase practical assistance and funding to international mine action projects and the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Two years have passed since the adoption of the World Summit Outcome, which elaborated on the concept of the responsibility to protect, and yet we have been too slow in responding to massive violations of human rights and mass atrocities. The principle of the responsibility to protect can no longer be confined to paper. We therefore encourage the Secretary-General to follow up on the World Summit document and take measures to operationalize that principle.

Only a reformed and proactive United Nations will be truly instrumental and effective. Only such a United Nations will have the required support and financing. Only such a United Nations will be trusted by the people.

The ability to adapt is the quality of the strong. Fitting in is the least we can do for future generations. It is the responsibility of every nation and the international community as such.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lithuania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Valdus Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zambia.

Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome His Excellency Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mwanawasa: Allow me at the outset to convey my warm congratulations to Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. My delegation is confident that with his immense wealth of experience, he will steer the session very successfully. Zambia assures him of its total support during his tenure of office.

Let me, at this point, pay tribute to Mr. Kurt Waldheim, the fourth Secretary-General of the United Nations, and later President of Austria, who died on 14 June 2007. To us, he was a great diplomat who made Africa one of his priorities, especially at the height of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa.

May I take this opportunity to thank Her Excellency Sheikha Rashed Al Khalifa of Bahrain for having presided over the affairs of the sixty-first session in an exemplary manner. Among her accomplishments was the carrying forward of the United Nations reforms called for at the 2005 World Summit. It was gratifying to have a lady preside over the highest office of the General Assembly after almost three decades of male dominance. I hope that this organ will not again take that long to have an excellent woman as President.

Let me now congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon of the Republic of Korea on his election as the eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations. I am confident that he will build upon the strong foundation that was laid by his predecessor, Kofi Annan of Ghana, to whom I wish to pay tribute for the manner in which he steered the Organization during his tenure in office. He made Africa proud, and I wish him success in his current and future endeavours.

Our world today presents many challenges. These include abject poverty for the majority of the world's inhabitants, underdevelopment, conflict, human trafficking, climate change, terrorism, violations of human rights, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and gender inequality. While some of these challenges have only recently emerged, others have been with us from time immemorial. These challenges cannot be entirely resolved within national boundaries or at the regional level. They can be resolved only at the multilateral level, with all the players carrying out their roles diligently. For that reason, Zambia supports a strong and coherent United Nations. We agree with the recommendation of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence that the United Nations urgently needs more coherence and synergy. That will enable it to perform as one and to use its unique universality, neutrality and capacity to operate efficiently.

Furthermore, Zambia supports the ongoing reforms of the United Nations. In particular, we welcome the mandate given to the Economic and Social Council to make it more effective in executing its duties, which include formulating policy recommendations on international and social issues, as well as coordinating activities of specialized agencies in the economic, social and related fields. In that regard, collaboration of the United Nations with the international financial institutions and the World Trade Organization should be further enhanced; we welcome the work going on in this area.

This brings me to another issue: reform of the Security Council. This matter has remained unresolved for more than a decade. United Nations reform cannot be complete without meaningful reform of the Security Council. Any new proposals to reform that vital organ should seriously consider Africa's call to have two permanent seats with full veto power. Africa is aware that the veto is an undemocratic instrument and would prefer to do away with it altogether. However, as long as others insist on keeping the veto, Africa should have it as well. The status quo is unacceptable. It is my hope that during Mr. Kerim's tenure of office, this aspect of the reform process will be concluded successfully.

The issue of climate change is very important to the current and future inhabitants of our planet. It is therefore fitting that one theme of this session is responding to climate change. I commend the Secretary-General for organizing the 24 September 2007 high-level event on this matter. Indeed, the effects of climate change are being felt mostly by the developing countries. For instance, Southern Africa is experiencing critical food shortages due to torrential

rains in some areas and severe drought in other parts of the region.

The problem of climate change is a global issue requiring global action within the multilateral context of the United Nations. As a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, Zambia has already taken several measures to implement those international instruments. In that regard, we submitted our first national communication report in 2004. We have also taken deliberate steps to create public awareness about the problem of climate change so that our people can devise appropriate local interventions.

Regarding measures aimed at adapting to climate change, Zambia has just finished formulating its National Adaptation Programme of Action. The programme will help us identify the most vulnerable sectors of our economy, as well as adaptation activities required to alleviate the adverse effects of climate change. For this reason, we call upon the international community to ensure that the Adaptation Fund under the Climate Change Convention, which has taken rather long to establish, is made operational.

While placing emphasis on adaptation, we also pledge to reduce emissions from industrial and other sources. We call upon industrialized countries, which have a history of producing these emissions, to take serious steps to reduce them. We believe that the situation is now serious and that narrow national interests in this matter must be discarded forthwith.

As a developing country, Zambia needs assistance to enhance its capacity in key adaptive areas, such as scientific research, early warning and rapid response, to address the adverse effects of climate change. Accordingly, Zambia calls for the speedy development and transfer of appropriate technologies to help us cope with the negative impacts of climate change, as well as to put us on a low-carbon path to economic growth. We also call for a more comprehensive institutional framework for international environmental governance.

In 2000, the developing world embraced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a comprehensive strategy to move our countries out of economic and social decline and better integrate us into the global economy. Halfway through the implementation period, many countries are far from attaining most of the Goals. That is so in spite of the improved economic performance recorded by some developing countries following recent debt relief initiatives, coupled with sustained prudent economic management.

To illustrate the point, in Zambia the economy grew by 6.2 per cent last year, and inflation declined to a single digit level for the first time in 30 years. Those economic gains, however, have not translated into a significant decline in the incidence of poverty, which stands at 68 per cent. Zambia's development efforts are further compromised by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and, now, the adverse effects of climate change.

With regard to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, my Government has declared it to be a national crisis, requiring sustained mitigation and preventive measures. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our cooperating partners for their support to Zambia in the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Despite these challenges, Zambia, for its part, has made steady progress and is likely to meet most of the MDGs by 2015. The Goals most likely not to be attained by 2015 are: reducing by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio, integrating the principles of sustainable development into the country's policies and programmes and reversing the loss of environmental resources. Our goal now is to translate the economic achievements into tangible improvements in the quality of life of the Zambian people. That goal is enshrined in Zambia's Vision 2030, which is aimed at raising the country to middle-income status, significantly reducing hunger and poverty and fostering a competitive and outward-oriented economy.

But that goal will remain elusive if our cooperating partners do not fulfil their commitments. Indeed, it is saddening to note that total official development assistance declined in real terms by 5.1 per cent between 2005 and 2006, and only five donor countries have met or exceeded the 0.7 per cent target. I urge the cooperating partners to fulfil their commitments. Furthermore, while Zambia welcomes the discussions and progress made on aid effectiveness following the Paris Declaration, we call for official development assistance to be delivered in a more efficient manner, in accordance with the Declaration.

Aid cannot be effective unless corruption is uprooted. My Government has, therefore, declared war against that social vice. Accordingly, I take this opportunity to urge the international community to

desist from providing safe havens for leaders who plunder national resources. Such ill-gotten wealth should be returned to the countries from where it was misappropriated so that it can be used to fight poverty.

Zambia condemns international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. For this reason, we call upon members of the international community to refrain from harbouring terrorists. Zambia, for its part, supports the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

Through regional bodies, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), developing countries enhance their ability to cooperate and also jointly negotiate for better access to developed countries' markets. Consequently, during Zambia's current chairmanship of SADC, we shall continue to consolidate the formation of the SADC free trade area by 2008 as a prerequisite to the Regional Customs Union. In addition, Zambia will, on behalf of SADC, seek funding to develop an adequate regional transboundary infrastructure in support of much-needed connectivity in areas such as water, transport, energy, communications and information technology.

Many regions, including Africa, have been dogged by conflict. This has adversely affected the countries' potential to participate in the global economic arena. In the quest for peace in our subregion, SADC has launched a stand-by brigade, which will have the capacity for peace support operations. It is our hope that the international community will render necessary support to the brigade to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

Better still, SADC and Zambia value the tenets of democracy, political stability and integrated economic development as the ultimate sound basis for peace and stability. SADC will, therefore, continue to promote the conducting of free and fair elections in the region.

Mr. Berdymukhammedov (Turkmenistan), Vice-President, took the Chair

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm, with regard to the theme of this session, Zambia's commitment to cooperate with the international community in addressing the problem of climate change. It is my sincere hope that all of us will play our full part, according to our abilities to deal with this serious global challenge. To that end, we should not remain indecisive and indifferent to this serious issue. Neither should we miss the opportunity to do what we can to make the world a better place to live in.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Minister of Defence for the Republic of Zambia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Elias Antonio Saca Gonzalez, President of the Republic of El Salvador

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Antonio Saca Gonzalez, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Elias Antonio Saca Gonzalez, President of the Republic of El Salvador, and invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saca Gonzalez (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the people and Government of El Salvador, I would like to extend the most sincere congratulations to Mr. Kerim on his being unanimously elected to preside over this session and to wish him every success in fulfilling his mandate. At the same time, I would like to express our appreciation of the dynamic work done by the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General and call on them to continue to make every effort to strengthen the United Nations.

Allow me to express once more our gratitude for the important role played by the Organization, in particular its contribution to conflict resolution and to economic and social development, as so successfully exemplified in the peace process in Central America, based on the 1987 Esquipulas II Agreement. Recently, Central American countries celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the signing of that Agreement which set in motion the process of establishing a firm and lasting peace in Central America with a view to achieving, through dialogue, a peaceful solution to the Central

American crisis and promoting peacebuilding and democratization in the region.

Following a long process of transition from war to peace, from peace to democracy and to freedom, we are now focusing our efforts on the implementation of an economic and social development model that is just and equitable. In particular, we are promoting an integration process that will allow us to strengthen our capabilities and combine resources to more efficiently tackle and thus benefit from the process of opening up to world trade.

In this context, I would like to mention, in particular, a regional issue that has attracted the attention of the international community and that was referred to yesterday in the media, namely, the Gulf of Fonseca. As President of El Salvador, I wish to inform you that I have submitted a formal initiative to the brother States of Honduras and Nicaragua in order to develop a frank and sincere dialogue with a view to ushering in a new era of cooperation in this area in order to truly establish a joint ownership regime and thereby facilitate the overall and sustainable development of the Gulf Zone for all its inhabitants. That proposal, made yesterday, was well received by the leaders of Honduras and Nicaragua. The three States should begin a new era of collaboration and cooperation in order to tackle and fully resolve issues related to the Gulf. We should not leave any problem in the Gulf of Fonseca unresolved, whether it be by a three-nation or a two-nation approach.

A topic of special interest for my country is international migration, in view of its positive impact on countries of origin and destination alike, and, in particular, because of the significant contributions immigrants make to the economy. Our Government is making efforts for Salvadorians who have emigrated, supporting them through our Embassies and Consulates. In this respect, we greatly appreciate the agreements and recommendations emanating from the United Nations High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, which reiterated the necessity of fully respecting the human rights of migrants and their families, who must be a central concern of internal and external immigration policy of States, including transit States.

I am pleased to confirm that the efforts I have made in favour of Salvadorian immigrants, especially in the United States, have yielded positive results such as the extension of the Temporary Protected States (TPS) programme, which guarantees work permits and the opportunity to reside in that country with no risk of being deported. Those efforts demonstrate my firm will to continue spearheading initiatives and efforts in order to stabilize migration for all of our fellow citizens.

In the Central American region, we have made significant progress in different areas, but unfortunately, long-standing and emerging threats could still affect the security of our citizens and the stability of our countries. It is therefore essential to unite our efforts to frame suitable national, regional and international policies.

Currently, in most of our countries, as well as in the United States and Mexico, citizens are noting that one of the greatest threats to democracy and economic and social development springs from the activities of gangs, generating a wave of violence and crime in an open challenge to the established order. Those anti-social groups do not conform to the patterns of traditional or ordinary crime, but gradually evolve into more sophisticated forms of organized crime whose manifestations can also be seen in countries outside the continent. Many countries represented here are not as yet faced with this threat. However, the criminal activities of such groups are expanding, both substantively and quantitatively, as is actually apparent and thus the treatment of this issue requires action and cooperation of all States, especially in Latin America. As for El Salvador, we are making efforts that have led to the reduction of crime and homicide perpetuated by such groups through joint actions involving our public security authorities, the judicial system and the legislative authority. At the same time, we are coordinating efforts and adopting measures within the framework of security policies for Central America.

We have to strengthen global cooperation in the fight against terrorism, which is one of the greatest threats to peace and international security. The recent thwarted terrorist attacks in European countries and the repeated threats by extremist groups to continue with their terrorist actions in different parts of the world are a grave threat and danger looming over our society. Consequently, we welcome the efforts of Member States of the United Nations to adopt a global counter-terrorism strategy, giving particular importance to preventing and combating terrorism on a unified, coherent and coordinated basis.

The Middle East is a region in which nations have developed different missions and supported initiatives for a just and lasting solution to the problem, while the United Nations itself has made undoubted efforts to that end, which, unfortunately, have not been successful.

We support any initiative or effort to redirect the peace process. In particular, we welcome the initiative to convene an international peace conference for the Middle East in November. That initiative is a source of renewed hope for achieving the long-awaited peace that will allow all peoples of the region to live free from fear, violence and destruction. It would also establish an environment conducive to political cooperation and to shared economic and social development. We recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, as well as Israel's right to live within secure and internationally recognized borders, so that both peoples can live in peace.

Taiwan is a unique political reality in the international community. It has systematically developed, in particular in recent years, under the leadership of President Chen Shui-bian. He has made his country a modern, peaceful entity that is resolutely determined to promote peace and international cooperation. Given that reality, we acknowledge the legitimate right of more than 23 million Taiwanese to determine their own future, just as other peoples have done. That is why we support the initiative to have the General Assembly review the case of Taiwan in the light of current global realities, acknowledging the right of the Taiwanese to hold a referendum on joining this international Organization.

El Salvador will continue to play an active role in the reform process of the United Nations, which, we reiterate, should be comprehensive. In that regard, since States are responsible for complying with the objectives of the Charter, we must strive not only to achieve consensus and move towards Security Council reform, but also to revitalize the General Assembly and thoroughly revise the mandate of the Economic and Social Council.

The current economic situation has improved for some developing countries that have achieved acceptable rates of growth. However, international instability in prices, commodities and raw materials — in particular the high prices for petroleum — is having a negative impact on our development efforts. Indeed, global economic short- and mid-term imbalances must be anticipated and prevented, and require the coordination of international macroeconomic policy involving developed and underdeveloped countries.

In an effort to review the criteria and conditions for the extension of international cooperation, the first Intergovernmental Conference on Middle-Income Countries took place in Madrid on 1 and 2 March. At the Conference, we identified several areas for strategic action that could guide the efforts of international donors to contribute to the development of that group of countries. We thank the Government of Spain for its readiness to host the event and for the meeting's success. We also express our gratitude to King Abdullah II of Jordan and his Government for convening the summit of the Group of Eleven in May, and in particular for the recommendation that resulted from that forum.

Next October, my country, El Salvador, will host the second International Conference on Development Cooperation with Middle-Income Countries in order to further study international measures allowing us to meet the Millennium Development Goals. We believe that donor countries and international financial organizations should reassess their development cooperation policies with the principal aim of encouraging those countries which are responsibly implementing transparent growth strategies that are adequately endowed in terms of finance management and of the quality and impact of projects. To the middle-income countries and the entire cooperating community, including international financial organizations, I reiterate here our cordial invitation to join us in the important event to take place in San Salvador in October.

With respect to development, I would stress that, in the past 10 years, my country has reduced the level of overall poverty from 65 per cent to 30 per cent. One of my Government's priorities is and will continue to be fighting extreme poverty, towards which we are implementing a series of substantive social programmes. One of the most important of those is the Solidarity Network, through which we directly support families living in extreme poverty, mainly in the rural areas, by granting health and education subsidies and by providing infrastructure, basic services and opportunities to enter the labour market through, inter alia, the provision of microcredit. We have also established a special health fund through which we

have increased basic health care for the most vulnerable sectors of the population, seeking to benefit more than 4 million people through comprehensive programmes to include prevention and the promotion of health education campaigns.

While we acknowledge that progress has been achieved and efforts made to improve the living standards of the most vulnerable sectors of the country, we must continue to enjoy international bilateral and multilateral cooperation if we are to achieve higher levels of well-being. Our Government is convinced that the social sphere is not complementary to anything else, but the basis of everything.

One of the most disturbing challenges to the present and future of the international community is global warming. In particular, as we learn in the impressive report prepared by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the harmful effects of climate change on all peoples have grown alarming in their human, material, economic and environmental impacts, which are increasingly being felt in countries and regions throughout the world. All States must speedily and fully adopt corrective measures in order substantially to reduce greenhouse gas emissions so as to halt the trend towards irreversible and massive environmental degradation. To that end, we urge developed countries to join in the efforts to curb that trend with responsibility and in a common but differentiated manner.

Alongside international efforts for environmental protection, the countries of Latin America, including those of Central America, Mexico and Colombia, members of the Puebla-Panama Plan, are undertaking measures and coordinating regional and subregional activities in the field of renewable and sustainable energy as alternatives to fossil fuels. Concerned by the instability of international hydrocarbon fuel prices, at the previous session of the General Assembly we proposed that the topic be included on the agenda because of its impact on economic development, in particular in developing countries. In the current situation of ever-spiralling high prices, we reiterate that proposal. We have been increasingly diverting precious economic resources that could, in other circumstances, be directed towards other programmes essential to our countries' human development.

That is why, at this global forum, we appeal to the oil-producing countries to seek, on the basis of international cooperation and solidarity, to implement flexible mechanisms to prevent hydrocarbon fuel prices from drastically impacting developing countries. We in the United Nations cannot ignore that issue, because countries that depend on oil could be bankrupted in the coming years.

I must mention that, faced with high oil prices, we are promoting several initiatives in El Salvador in the area of alternative and renewable energy, such as biofuels. One of those initiatives has led to the formulation of a bill on incentives for investing in renewable energy. We also analysed the economic and technical feasibility of introducing a plan to produce ethanol on a national scale. That is in addition to stepping up thermal energy, which in El Salvador already represents 23 per cent of energy consumption with the entry into operation of the new plant in the eastern part of El Salvador. Similarly, we are beginning technical and financial feasibility studies to promote the production of biodiesel through the establishment of a pilot plant and the use of different crops, which will make it possible to promote reforestation and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, relying for this on the direct support of the United States, Brazil and Colombia.

We believe that Latin American and other developing countries could contribute substantively to global environmental conservation efforts. But efforts will be limited if industrialized countries do not fully assume their responsibilities when it comes to the environment.

Lastly, I would like to recall that we are all representatives of our respective countries and they are the ones that we must serve and protect from the threats that we face. We are convinced that the future of humanity will depend on the decisions and actions that we will adopt here and that we will implement in areas of common global interest. We have the responsibility and obligation to act, and this we must do in order to avert a problem of uncontrollable proportions.

We must understand that the future of humanity will depend on the decisions and actions that we adopt today, but I would like to strongly emphasize that people reach development as a result of perseverance, order, work, discipline and long-term vision. The transformation process and the progress that has been achieved in economic and social policy in the

democratic institutions of my country are the result of the exercise of freedoms. Progress is built and gains momentum when people work hard, persevere and have full freedom, which makes it possible to move towards the implementation of the greatest dream that people have: to enjoy progress and social peace.

I invite the Assembly to combine their efforts to consolidate freedoms in those countries that already enjoy them and to return freedoms to countries that do not have them or have lost them. Let us remember that the dearest freedom is the one that we do not have, that liberty is not missed until we lose it. Without freedom, there is no economic and social progress. We must work every day for freedoms that are threatened by extreme radicalism or populist demagoguery, the seeds that destroy freedom. God bless the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Elías Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Festus G. Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Botswana.

Mr. Festus G. Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome Mr. Festus G. Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mogae: Many speakers before me have eloquently debated the theme for this session. I am delighted that no one disputes the evidence that science presents to us concerning climate change. Today we meet in this Hall as neighbours and residents of this one planet earth. We are bound together by our common humanity and shared future. We have within us the capacity to act resolutely to save our planet, and now is the time. We cannot afford to squander any more opportunities, for tomorrow might be too late.

William Shakespeare instructs us, in his famous work, Julius Caesar, that:

> "There is a tide in the affairs of men,
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
> Omitted, all the voyage of their life
> Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
> On such a full sea are we now afloat;
> And we must take the current when it serves,
> Or lose our ventures."

We are convinced that we should focus on working together to save our planet from the increasing threat of global warming and all its attendant consequences. When we meet as the peoples of the world, we must of necessity remind ourselves of the original and higher purpose of the United Nations. Many of the global challenges we face persist, not because they are insurmountable, but because we have fallen short of the commitments and obligations freely entered into under the Charter.

We, the peoples of the earth, have the human and cultural resources and technology to end severe global poverty and disease, reverse climate change, prevent wars and alleviate human suffering. Unfortunately, substantial resources continue to be wasted on destructive endeavours rather than constructive work. We squander valuable assets in the production of weapons of war and mass destruction rather than development.

The world would be a much better place if the natural resources on this planet were exploited to feed, clothe, educate, care for the sick, prevent diseases and build communities. Young men and women should grow up looking forward to doing extraordinary things to advance the cause of economic and social progress and not spending precious time manufacturing bombs and weapons of war or planning how to kill other human beings.

It is deeply regrettable that nations continue to give higher priority to the narrow pursuit of national interests than to cooperation for the common good and mutual benefit. This emphasis on rivalry breeds injustice, intolerance, extremism and aggression. We must remind ourselves that all of us are the people of this earth and no other. We are bound by our common humanity. We must rise to the challenge of the

founders of this unique universal Organization, so that we may live for our respective countries rather than die for them and together build a more just and equitable future for us all.

The United Nations has touched the lives of the vast majority of our fellow human beings. We therefore reaffirm our abiding faith in its efficacy and usefulness in addressing global issues. The Organization embodies our hope and aspirations for peace, security, respect for human rights and development; in one word, a better life for all. In that respect, the search for consensus in all aspects of United Nations reform must of necessity continue in a fair, just and balanced manner.

From 51 Member States in 1945 to 192 in 2007, the United Nations has grown in diversity and universality. It has also spread and consolidated its legitimacy and authority throughout the world. The United Nations is the centre for harmonizing the actions of nations towards the attainment of the common good. Its strength lies in its unparalleled legitimacy. Without the United Nations, States, both large and small, would encounter many formidable challenges.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that for this Organization to live up to its mandate and to people's expectations, it has to constantly reform itself to respond to contemporary global challenges and realities. In his inspiring and visionary statement at the closing of the San Francisco Conference 62 years ago, President Harry Truman of the United States proffered timeless wise counsel when he said,

> "This Charter, like our own Constitution, will be expanded and improved as time goes on. No one claims that it is now a final or a perfect instrument. It has not been poured into a fixed mold. Changing world conditions will require readjustments — but they will be the readjustments of peace and not of war." (*United Nations Conference on International Organization, Documents, Vol. I, 680 (26 June 1945)*)

Those visionary words of one of the founding fathers of the United Nations should guide us in dealing with United Nations reform. We call upon the original signatories of the United Nations Charter and, in particular the permanent members of the Security Council, to assume greater leadership in the search for consensus and compromise on the reform of the United Nations Security Council. They should be more flexible in responding to proposals put forward on the reforms of the Security Council.

As nation States we are encouraged to build sound democratic institutions. It is imperative, therefore, that the principle of fairer, more inclusive, participatory and accountable institutions should be extended to global governance. In that respect, it should be perfectly understandable why a substantial number of Member States consider it not only necessary, but also long overdue, to increase membership of the Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. Today, important matters of international peace and security cannot be resolved through the monopoly of fire power. It requires greater participation and collaboration of nations — large and small.

Botswana recognizes that we cannot all be members of the Security Council. There are those among us who have the capacity to carry the daunting responsibilities of permanent membership. That is why it should be possible for us to reach consensus in making "readjustments of peace and not of war". An all-or-nothing approach is not in our best interest. Botswana strongly supports the search for a compromise on that long-standing issue, which if left unresolved can only become an unnecessary distraction to other equally pressing priorities.

Conflicts in Africa cause the loss of hundreds of thousands of innocent lives. Many people are driven into abject poverty and exposed to disease due to the massive displacement of populations and destruction of their productive capacity. Huge amounts of resources are annually allocated to the United Nations peacekeeping budget to resolve conflicts. Even more resources are needed for the care and upkeep of refugees and displaced peoples.

The situation in Darfur continues to cause concern. Concerted efforts are needed to bring that conflict to an end. In this respect, we welcome the Security Council decision to deploy a peacekeeping mission in Darfur and call upon our brothers and sisters in the Sudan to work together to find a lasting political settlement.

Botswana is concerned about the situation in Chad and the Central African Republic. The loss of civilian lives is intolerable. We call upon Chad, the Central African Republic and other parties to those

conflicts to commit to a peaceful political process to avert further loss of lives. It is clear that the resolution of conflict in that region will require closer cooperation, collaboration and partnership between and among those countries involved in conflict situations.

Following elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo we are hopeful the country is on the road to recovery. It is important for the international community to continue to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts. The marauding lawless militias that continue to undermine the peace process should be left in no doubt that anarchy will not be tolerated.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the countries of the Great Lakes region of Africa will for the foreseeable future require the assured support and partnership of the international community, not only in peacebuilding but more importantly, in the prevention of conflicts.

Botswana acknowledges the existence of those problems, not because we consider the future of Africa to be hopeless or bleak. We do so in order to arrive at a correct diagnosis of the illnesses and hence the prescription of the right remedy.

The African Union is playing a pivotal role in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts on the continent. While the United Nations Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, Africa should be a dependable and indispensable partner in responding expeditiously to the urgent need to end the conflicts and save lives.

The countries and peoples of Africa should recognize that the primary responsibility for durable peace and social and economic development lies with them. In that respect, we should adopt sound policies and programmes that promote economic growth and development, foreign direct investment as well as domestic investment.

Indeed we are witnessing significant economic growth in Africa. The latest International Monetary Fund projections are that, in 2007 the African economy is expected to grow by six per cent, just below the seven per cent per annum target of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, that is necessary to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We look to our development partners to deliver on the pledges to scale up official development assistance to Africa, effect meaningful debt relief, improve market access for African goods and services and encourage their private sectors to invest in Africa.

In the year 2000, at the dawn of the new millennium, we convened in these hallowed halls to chart a new path for the United Nations development agenda. We adopted the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. We undertook to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, promote gender equality as well as to combat HIV and AIDS.

The Millennium Summit followed many global conferences of the 1990s at which we made numerous commitments to combat poverty and underdevelopment. The outcomes of these United Nations conferences and summits provide a veritable template for addressing the debilitating scourge of poverty, disease, hunger and underdevelopment in the world.

Today, as we meet here seven years after the adoption of the Millennium Declaration and half way to 2015, we should pause and take serious stock of the progress made or the lack of it. It is evident that, while other regions of the world are making progress towards the realization of the MDGs, indications are that unless something is done to support Africa, the continent is unlikely to achieve any of the Goals by 2015. Statistics tell tales of a continent that is host to huge numbers of the poor and the hungry. Diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, still kill many people in Africa. Those factors require an urgent response, as they create conditions that pose a threat to peace, stability and security.

In this interdependent world, the United Nations cannot realistically hope to achieve the MDGs by 2015 if one part of humanity is lagging so far behind. Something must be done to assist and support Africa. In March 2002 at Monterrey, Mexico, we recognized the imperative of global cooperation and partnership in the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. We agreed that

> "achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, demands a new partnership between developed and developing countries" (*resolution 58/130, para. 11*).

Let us honour our commitments and move forward.

Let me conclude by reiterating the fact that Botswana has long recognized that sustainable development has to be a nationally owned and led process that requires sound democratic institutions and prudent economic management. Adherence to those principles, coupled with the exploitation of mineral resources and donor support, enabled us to achieve rapid economic growth and some measure of development.

Continued assistance is necessary to enable us to consolidate the gains of the past few years and ensure sustainable development. In that respect, the scope of development cooperation should include private sector development, private investment and access to technology. Assistance to middle-income countries such as Botswana is crucial and in the long-term interest of the global economy. We are asking not for handouts, but for assured support, partnership and collaboration.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Botswana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Festus Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. René Garcia Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. René Garcia Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. René Garcia Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Préval (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Kerim on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. There is no doubt that his deep familiarity with the academic world, tied to his experience in the political world and in business, is a major asset that will help him to lead us confidently in the Assembly's work. I sincerely hope that our debates will be fruitful and lead to the adoption of relevant resolutions.

Allow me also to welcome our new Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who recently honoured us with his first visit to Haiti in August. We are firmly convinced that the new Secretary-General will rapidly bring to bear his experience of the United Nations system, his vast learning and his broad open-mindedness in carrying out the reforms that most Members of our Organization know to be necessary.

Despite its difficulties, our Organization remains the principal forum offering all States, large and small, the same space for dialogue to address the fundamental issues surrounding our coexistence and future on this planet. May the Secretary-General be assured of the support of the Haitians in his efforts to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations and to enable it to achieve its full potential.

I am speaking here on behalf of a people that has endured great suffering over the past 200 years: material deprivation of all sorts, vulnerability to natural threats and disasters, poor access to health care and education, the deaths of hundreds of thousands of children from malnutrition, and a very young population — 65 per cent below the age of 25 — denied any true opportunity for employment.

I speak on behalf of a people that seems to be depopulating itself as its most competent professionals forsake a life of difficulties to the benefit of other countries or businesses, and as its children, women and senior citizens, weary of living what seems to be a hopeless existence, take to the open seas on makeshift boats, seeking a better life under other skies.

I speak on behalf of a State whose neighbours, including the most powerful among them, sometimes portray it as a threat to regional security because Haiti appears too frequently on the agenda of the General Assembly or the Security Council, with a burdensome array of problems of insecurity or political unrest.

I speak on behalf of a country that analyses somewhat prematurely describe as a failed State because it has trouble making its institutions operational and organizing a way of life appropriate to the majority of its citizens, and because the State itself,

unfortunately, often finds itself waging an endless war against its own children.

Haiti is on the way to bidding farewell to that State — slowly, patiently, yet resolutely. The organized armed gangs responsible for violence against innocent people have been dismantled and there is no longer any forbidden zone for peaceful citizens anywhere on our territory.

The management of our economy has improved considerably. We have stopped printing money. That has reduced the inflation rate — which had run rampant for several years and which just a few months ago reached 40 per cent — to less than 10 per cent. Our gross domestic product has seen moderate but sustained growth, after having been negative for more than 10 years.

We have worked patiently to establish an atmosphere of calm and collegiality within the political class, which is a condition essential for enabling the political forces to put an end to their perpetual factional disputes and to mobilize around genuine national reconstruction plans.

The Security Council will soon extend the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for another year. Such an extension would be most appropriate. This reminds us that our victory over insecurity, the holding of democratic elections, the improvement of governance in the country and the strengthening of our judicial system were possible thanks in large part to the efforts of United Nations forces within the framework of the Organization's peacekeeping programme. Certainly, the members of our national police, although young, inexperienced and underequipped, have proved to be courageous and determined in the fight against insecurity, but MINUSTAH's support at their side has been greatly appreciated. Let me take this opportunity to express once again our thanks to the Organization, to the Security Council and to the friendly countries that mobilized their own resources and citizens to come to the assistance of Haitians at this difficult time in their history.

Haitians, recalling that they belong to a people who fought for their freedom and carried the torch of liberty to many other shores of the continent, continue to see the presence of foreign armed forces on their soil as a wound to their national sovereignty. Practically speaking, however, that is the only realistic formula currently available that is enabling Haitians to regain freedom and live in peace.

It is now up to Haitians to benefit from this period of calm by pulling themselves together, reconsidering their fate with a positive vision of the future and returning to daily life as a disciplined, hardworking and law-abiding people while our State strengthens its internal cohesion, modernizes its judicial system and improves its governance and its capacity to intervene, so that it can create and maintain an environment conducive to economic recovery and genuine sustainable development.

The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was an act of awareness. Nevertheless, halfway towards the deadline set for achievement of the Goals, it seems clear that many of us — including my country — will not meet the 2015 targets, despite the considerable progress made in various areas. Mobilizing resources to support the pursuit of the MDGs is a difficult but essential task. It is not only necessary for ethical reasons or because the international community must honour its commitments. Problems that cannot be resolved in a poor State will spill over to richer States, which will thus be forced to revisit problems that they had already overcome by themselves at the national level.

The General Assembly has included in the agenda for the present session an item relating to cooperation in combating the activities of transnational organized crime. In that connection, I should like to highlight my country's efforts to fight against corruption and illicit drug trafficking. In Haiti, we are currently developing ways to deal with corruption. We have begun to work to strengthen State structures and to plan legal and regulatory reforms to be established to ensure that that endemic evil disappears from our institutional practices, both in politics and in business.

But the fight against drug trafficking is of another scale entirely, because it sets us squarely against sophisticated and well-organized adversaries who have access to powerful international networks in both drug-producing and drug-consuming countries. We are sensitive to the human suffering and social upheaval attributable to drug abuse, and we are aware of the efforts being made to treat and rehabilitate addicts, primarily in the major drug-consuming countries. However, trafficking also has harmful effects on the economic, social and political structures of small States

such as mine and poses a serious threat to their sovereignty and security, even if they are only transit States. The approach that has emerged from various international conferences focuses on prevention and demand-reduction in consumer countries first and then to reduce supply in producing countries and suppress trafficking networks.

Haiti and the Dominican Republic are on the traffic route of one of the most intense flows between the producer countries of South America and the consumer countries of North America. We are firmly committed to helping the countries of the North eliminate the drugs that arrive in their countries by way of our territory as a place of transit. But we cannot deal with this scourge alone, and our efforts to improve the monitoring of our land, sea and air borders and strengthen our institutions come up against the power of the networks put in place by the traffickers.

The solutions developed to deal with these problems will clearly yield no results if we do not urgently address the issue of economic development, because, as has been eloquently stated in reports of the Secretary-General, development is another name for peace.

It follows from that observation that we need a new culture of international solidarity based on a comprehensive and coordinated approach in which the fight against poverty goes hand in hand with sustainable development. It is an approach in which development assistance and the fight against insecurity are supported by the efforts of more developed countries to open up their markets, to encourage flows of foreign direct investment and technology transfers and to support the private sector and entrepreneurial initiatives: a comprehensive approach in which rich and poor understand that they are co-owners of this planet and that its fate is in all our hands.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. René Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gbagbo (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on the quality of the intensive work done in such a short period of time at the head of the United Nations. I would like to congratulate him sincerely and to encourage him on his correct assessment of the world's present problems.

This is the first time that I am taking part in the General Assembly in my seven years at the head of Côte d'Ivoire. As members know, I am fully committed to resolving the crisis gripping my country and which has so mobilized the international community over the past five years. My presence, today, here in New York, at this rostrum, is the best proof of the climate of calm prevailing in Côte d'Ivoire today, following the signing of the Ouagadougou political agreement, which was the outcome of direct dialogue between the State and the former rebels.

That agreement was endorsed by the Security Council which unanimously adopted resolution 1765 (2007). On behalf of the people of Côte d'Ivoire, I wish to thank and to greet all who were involved in these positive developments: the countries members of the Security Council, the countries members of the African Union Peace and Security Council, all the countries of the African Union and the countries members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In particular, I thank the heads of State whose personal involvement was key in resolving the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire: President Thabo Mbeki, mediator in the Ivorian crisis appointed by the African Union, and President Blaise Compaoré, facilitator for the direct inter-Ivorian dialogue, as current Chairman of ECOWAS.

We have noted that despite the international community's efforts over the previous four years, the peace process was blocked and the country was at a standstill. That is why, on 19 December 2006, I suggested to my compatriots a way out of the crisis, focusing on five points: first, the establishment of direct dialogue with the rebels, aimed at disarmament and the reunification of the country; secondly, the removal of the Zone of Confidence; thirdly, the establishment of a national service programme; fourthly, a general amnesty; and finally, the establishment of an assistance programme for the return of persons displaced by the war. That plan was based on the experience of solutions considered up until then, but with a completely different approach, in order to ensure complete ownership of the peace process by the Ivorians themselves.

I thus took up direct dialogue with the rebels. Our discussions, through the facilitation of President Blaise Compaoré, took place in neighbouring Burkina Faso, the West African country with the closest historical and sociological ties with Côte d'Ivoire. Those discussions led to the signing on 4 March 2007 of the Ouagadougou political agreement.

In accordance with that agreement, a new Government was established. It is headed by the former rebel leader, Mr. Guillaume Soro. With this Government, we have made considerable progress in a short period of time. An integrated command centre, bringing together soldiers from the national armed forces and from the former rebel forces, was established on 16 March 2007. Its mission is to set up a joint force entrusted with ensuring security and the free movement of individuals and goods throughout the national territory. A general amnesty order was issued on 11 April 2007. Disarmament effectively began with the 30 July 2007 "peace bonfire" in Bouaké. The redeployment of the administration and reinstatement of magistrates throughout the territory has now taken place. A plan for the return of those displaced by the war has been put in place. Mobile courts to identify members of the population and update electoral lists began yesterday, Tuesday, 25 September 2007. We have made major strides towards peace since the Ouagadougou peace agreement.

The lesson I draw from this experience of direct dialogue between State authorities and the rebels has led me to invite the international community to favour local solutions in the settlement of conflicts. The United Nations in New York should make arrangements to monitor the implementation of solutions adopted by parties to a conflict.

Côte d'Ivoire will emerge from crisis. Côte d'Ivoire is emerging from crisis. Today more than ever, it needs the support of the international community to build peace and stability within its borders and in the West African subregion.

In this context, and given the climate of calm prevailing in the country, I would like the United Nations to revise downward the security rating. Phase III no longer reflects reality.

In the same spirit, with the implementation of the Ouagadougou agreement, today Côte d'Ivoire is reunified and it is now up to the State to restore law and order throughout the territory. The agreement provides explicitly that in the redeployment of administrators, the forces of law and order are to take part in providing protection for administrative staff, as well as for the citizen population. I appeal here for the partial lifting of the weapons embargo so that the Ivorian State can carry out its task of protecting persons and goods.

Moreover, and in the present context of national reconciliation, Ivorians remain concerned that individual sanctions are still imposed on some of our compatriots. Since the Ouagadougou Agreement, those young people have put heart and soul into the search for peace. For that reason I am formally asking the United Nations, within the spirit and letter of the Ouagadougou political Agreement (S/2007/144) endorsed by resolution 1765 (2007) to lift the sanctions imposed on Charles Blé Goudé, Eugène Djué and Martin Kouakou Fofie.

Côte d'Ivoire is a sound country and our management of public finance has made it possible for the Ivorian State to function and to ensure a minimum standard of living for its people. But the ongoing crisis has ultimately led to a reduction in the financial resources available to the State and has disrupted its financial stability.

Today I am asking for assistance to help finance the actions related directly to resolving the crisis, namely: the civil service, mobile courts, general elections, the return of those displaced by war and in general, peacebuilding.

But beyond the short and medium-term actions, Côte d'Ivoire requires international aid to strengthen the basis for a more robust economic recovery in the long-term. We must rebuild and strengthen our community infrastructures. Our schools and health centres were damaged during the war. We must rebuild and strengthen our economic infrastructures — roads, railways, electric and water supply stations were severely strained by the crisis.

All observers and all actors in the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire agree that elections are the goal of the crisis resolution process in Côte d'Ivoire. The holding of transparent, free elections that are open to all is not only a requirement under my political culture, but is, above all a democratic requirement. Elections are proof of good governance. I intend to make my country — Côte d'Ivoire — a modern State — that is, a State in which people appoint their leaders through just and transparent elections.

Democratic elections are a requirement for my country in order to modernize our political life. Elections are also required for our economic recovery. We absolutely must reorganize the coming elections in Côte d'Ivoire and hold them successfully in order to restore confidence among economic actors in the country and abroad.

Elections are a requirement as well for stability in our country and in the subregion. We must organize elections quickly to confer political legitimacy on those who are exercising State power in order to stabilize the society in Côte d'Ivoire and ensure economic recovery in West Africa. Finally, elections are a constitutional imperative. According to our constitution, when exceptional circumstances make it impossible to hold elections — as was the case before the country was reunified — all institutions within the Republic function solely with a view to holding elections. For that reason, the elections must be reorganized quickly so that we can move beyond this constitutional, but exceptional situation.

For all those reasons, from this rostrum at the United Nations I invite all friends of Côte d'Ivoire throughout the world, but also and above all the politicians, both men and women, Ivorians and all peoples living in Côte d'Ivoire to become involved in the peace process. I invite them to become fully invested in the electoral process underway and to contribute, each person according to his or her ability, to national reconciliation and to peacebuilding.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President de Menezes: Thank you for inviting me to be here today. I bring you greetings from the people of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe. This is my first opportunity to personally congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon and to thank him for taking on the huge responsibilities he has assumed as Secretary-General. We offer him our full support for the difficult tasks ahead.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Srgjan Kerim for his election as President of the current session and to thank Ms. Al Khalifa for her work in guiding the sixty-first session so well.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General for the choice of the topics for this session, such as climate change, finance for development, the Millennium Development Goals and countering terrorism.

We come together this year at a time of enormous challenges for the United Nations. The world situation is very serious. One difficulty is that the problems are of such enormous complexity that the mass of facts

presented to the public by the media make it exceedingly difficult for average people to understand the situation.

Many of us in this room today live far from the troubled areas of the earth. So, it is, perhaps, hard to comprehend the plight of long-suffering peoples like those in Afghanistan, Darfur, Iraq, Palestine, Sierra Leone and Somalia, among so many others. But we must reject prejudice and discrimination and end those conflicts.

For those who still ignore our existence, may I remind them that my country, Sao Tome and Principe, is an African nation composed of two islands in the Gulf of Guinea and independent from Portugal since 12 July 1975. So, I wanted to say that we also join the calls to defeat terrorist extremism everywhere. However, we have already seen that this will not be achieved by military force, but by ideas and ideals that win hearts and minds.

Regarding the Millennium Development Goals, I want to express my regret that so little progress has been made towards achieving these worthy ends. How can we ignore those who are to be helped by those Goals, the least, the last and the lost? As the Nobel Laureate Martin Luther King once said,

> "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly".

I join previous speakers in saying that despite all the technological and scientific advances, half of the world's population lives on less than $2 per day. Twenty per cent of everyone alive suffer from chronic hunger. Every single day, 30,000 children die needlessly from dehydration, diarrhoea or infections, which could be all too easily prevented or cured. In many countries, children are not even given a name until they are one month old because so many of them do not live that long. One billion adults today are illiterate; 100 million children cannot go to school because of their poverty.

Now, with regard to how to finance development, we are told that globalization is the way, that a rising tide will lift all boats. But in many parts of the world the rising tide of globalization lifted the yachts and swamped the rowboats. Can private corporations realistically be expected to combine their entrepreneurial activities with furthering social causes? Obviously, some companies must improve their practices and be held accountable for cleaning up their environmental disasters, such as those in the Niger Delta. But to cast companies in the role of economic reformers is unrealistic. It seems that perhaps globalization has made the right to shop more important than the right to vote.

At the same time, we must also be realistic about the results of aid. It seems that international organizations sometimes suffer from poverty of expectations. Our own people in the developing world are also at times crucified on the poverty of their own desires. Instead of raging against our destiny, we have lowered our standards. I think the humiliation of poverty actually scorches the heart and creates despair.

How can we come here year after year and see this despair, disease and hunger and not feel enormous sorrow? We must accept that global poverty is the disgrace of our affluent era. So how do we alleviate poverty? Many say that Africa is poor because of bad governance and corruption. I strongly reject that view. Is it shameful to remember how all of our countries in Africa, all of us, were when we became independent, or how we were even more recently in Sao Tome and Principe.

Let me say a little bit about how it was and how it is in Sao Tome and Principe. The majority of people grew up in wooden shacks, with no running water, no electricity, no toilet and no chance for an education. In 1975, the country emerged from centuries of slavery and oppressive colonialism to independence with almost no teachers, no doctors, totally unprepared to govern ourselves or create an economy that did not depend on slave or contract labour as the only means of profit. We have struggled. We have stumbled. But today we have a vibrant and stable democracy that we are proud of. We have a high percentage of girls in school. We have literacy rates far above the average in the developing world. We have free health care for all of our citizens, although it is woefully inadequate for lack of funds. We have almost eradicated malaria. We have low corruption, while also being rated among the best countries in the world for freedom of the press. We spend almost no money on defence and we have never fought a war.

The President returned to the Chair.

We are grateful for aid. My people would suffer even more than they already do without the World Food Programme, for example. The World Health Organization and the Global Fund to fight tuberculosis and malaria are working with us very well. The Republic of Taiwan, the people of the island of Formosa, with their well-known generosity and special attention to our realities, have been crucial in our own success against malaria. Many organizations and individuals have worked with us for many years with open hearts and generous spirits, and we thank them all for that.

Throughout our 32 years of independence, we have followed the advice of international organizations and built up some $350 million in bilateral and multilateral debt, most of which was recently forgiven under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and other programmes. Allow me to take this opportunity to present, on behalf of the people of Sao Tome and Principe, our deepest gratitude.

As long as massive poverty, injustice and obscene inequality persist in our world, none of us can rest. I say to all, please do not look the other way. Do not hesitate. The future might say that what we failed to do was tragic, but let me also say that what we did do was truly heroic.

Finally, before ending, and as I have done in prior years, I wish to refer to two situations to which I call the attention of members and implore their solidarity, regardless of whether they are poor or rich.

One of those situations is the issue of Taiwan. There are 23 million people living on Formosa island, also called Taiwan. They do not ask the international community to help them because they are poor. On the contrary, they are one of the main recognized world economic powers, and they are helping other countries, such as Sao Tome and Principe. They only ask to be recognized as a sovereign country and to be included as such on the lists of the United Nations and its agencies. This is a question of justice.

Also a question of justice is the issue of the United States Government lifting the embargo against Cuba, repealing the Helms-Burton Act of 1996 and allowing for free trade and free travel. Let the Cubans settle their problems among themselves. This is a democratic act.

I thank all members for being here today and listening. May God bless us all.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by His Excellency Mr. Nuri Kamel Al-Maliki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Nuri Kamel Al-Maliki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Nuri Kamel Al-Maliki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Al-Maliki (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured to address the General Assembly as the first Prime Minister of a constitutionally permanent Government representing Iraq, its people, and its aspirations in cementing the foundations of democracy, peace, freedom and cooperation with the international community. I come carrying the concerns of the people of the Valley of Two Rivers who built the most ancient civilization and established the first laws, and who today offer humanity a lofty example in sustaining life, facing challenges, and persisting in protecting our young democratic experience.

The Iraqi people lived isolated from the world in the shadow of dictatorship for 35 years. There was no freedom of expression or belief, no multiple party system, no free elections, no democratic institutions, no communications systems, and no media except those that were controlled by the Government intelligence agencies.

Millions of victims in Iraq suffered throughout that era in adventurous wars with two neighbouring countries, Iran and Kuwait. Genocidal mass murder was committed inside Iraq, such as during the al-Anfaal campaign and in Halabja. In addition, there were mass graves, horrific prison cells and detention camps, and the immense destruction that plagued the infrastructure of the various governmental institutions.

Today in the new Iraq, there are hundreds of parties active within 20 political alliances. There are more than 6,000 civil society organizations, hundreds of newspapers and magazines, 40 local and satellite TV stations, as well as the offices of foreign correspondents from all over the world working without restrictions or conditions.

The new Iraq is being targeted today. Terrorism kills civilians, journalists, artists, intellectuals and professionals; it attacks universities, marketplaces and libraries; it blows up mosques and churches and destroys the infrastructure of State institutions. We consider terrorism to be an extension of the fallen dictatorship, although it may vary in its external form or in the gangs that carry it out. Terrorism seeks to abort the political process and to ignite sectarian strife as a prelude to hijacking Iraq back into the era of tyranny, oppression and backwardness.

Car bombs, explosive vests in public places and the display of decapitated heads on television are all messages of threat and intimidation that terrorists send to the world community, the bloody chapters of which were executed in Algeria, Spain, England, France, Lebanon, Turkey and here in New York. We are steadfast and determined to exterminate and defeat terrorism in Iraq so that it does not spread through the countries of the world, repeating the tragedy.

Iraq, which carries the greater burden in confronting terrorism, calls upon the nations of the world to help and join in its efforts to fight the scourge of terrorism. Our battle aims at providing security, stability and prosperity, and at protecting our democratic experience. We are determined to be victorious in our battle, which will be a victory for humanity. The fierce onslaught of terror against Iraq since the fall of the dictatorship has not stopped our people, through three epic elections, from laying the groundwork for a democratic experience unique in Iraq's history and the region, in which, as a permanent Constitution was voted upon, a parliament was elected and a National Unity Government was established.

The new Iraq living through its nascent democratic experience is governed by constitutional institutions, in which freedom of opinion, belief and expression are respected. That Iraq will not retreat from its democratic option, for which our people have paid a very high price. Our position requires the support and cooperation of the world's nations so that Iraq can build a modern State that guarantees justice, equality and respect for religious, intellectual, sectarian and ethnic pluralism.

Our people, who have enjoyed the taste of freedom after eras of tyranny and oppression, will continue on the road towards building a State of institutions, reinforcing the authority of law, respecting human rights, and the active participation of women in all areas. The national reconciliation and dialogue initiative that I launched upon assuming my responsibility as the Prime Minister of the National Unity Government did not come out of thin air. Its strength arises from the Iraqi people's civilization and cultural heritage, which have made great contributions to humankind. Iraqis have lived in peace, brotherhood, forgiveness and tolerance since the dawn of history. Their religious, national, sectarian and ethnic diversity have been elements of strength, reinforcing national unity.

We think of national reconciliation as a life boat, a perpetual peace project and a safe harbour for the political process and the democratic experience. We also believe that national reconciliation is not the responsibility of the Government alone. It is a collective responsibility held by the political powers, intellectual leaders, religious leaders, the educated, civil society organizations and all the active powers in the Iraqi arena. National reconciliation is the strategic choice that has saved our country from slipping into the pit of a sectarian war that was planned by the enemies of freedom and democracy after they blew up the tomb of the two Askari imams in Samara.

National reconciliation is not a dinner party prepared between those in dispute, nor is it a dose of medicine, as some might think. It is a realistic vision that counteracts the burdensome legacy of the fallen regime in all areas. It lays the foundation for political, social and economic progress and the security that we

strive for. Furthermore, it cements the principles of the new political system.

National reconciliation is the olive branch that blossomed into the formation of support councils in many of our provinces and Iraqi cities. It was also successful in leading some 28,000 citizens from Iraqi tribes to join our military efforts to combat terrorism. It has resulted in the restoration of security in our cities, villages and provinces, including in Al-Anbar province, which has been liberated from the Al-Qaida terrorist organization. The terrorists fled from there, only to face another defeat, this time in Diyala province. Thus, Al-Qaida is losing its safe havens, one by one.

Indeed, national reconciliation is stronger than the weapons of terrorism. It caused the reintegration of more than 14,000 people who had been members of armed groups that splintered off from Al-Qaida. Those fighters stood alongside our armed forces and the multinational forces battling Al-Qaida, dealing devastating blows to that terrorist organization.

The practical accomplishments that have been achieved through constant mobilization for national reconciliation are considered important successes, in contrast to the great challenges facing Iraq and the experiences of people who have suffered from dictatorships and civil and sectarian wars.

We emphasize that the acts of sectarian violence being committed in Iraq are not perpetrated by the main elements of society, but rather by extremists and fanatics belonging to various groups. We have been successful in largely containing this problem. The average number of sectarian killings has decreased and security and stability have been restored in many former hot spots. That has helped the return of thousands of displaced families to their homes. We are resolved to fight any and all outlaws, regardless of their sectarian or political affiliations. Our armed forces have been steadfast in establishing law and order and in instilling a sense of respect for the Government in many provinces whose residents have diverse religious, sectarian and ethnic affiliations.

The skills and capabilities of our security and military agencies have grown swiftly as they have confronted terrorist organizations, militias and organized crime groups. However, they need further training and development so that they can quickly take over from the multinational forces the responsibility for security throughout Iraq. Having proved our ability to provide security in eight provinces, we are prepared to assume full and swift responsibility for security so that we can protect the democratic achievements of our people. We shall work to ensure that our armed forces act in a professional manner and are loyal first and foremost to our country, not to an individual party, sect or ethnicity.

In addition to those achievements, the Government of National Unity has begun the process of reconstruction. We have voted on the largest budget in Iraq's contemporary history. With the cooperation of parliament, we have adopted the investment law, which is considered a step forward that will stimulate the Iraqi economy and move it from a centrally based system to one based on free enterprise and a market economy. That in turn will help to fulfil our people's aspirations to development, prosperity and well-being. In addition, the Government has finalized a draft law for oil and gas, which if approved by parliament will ensure fair distribution of wealth, since oil is considered the property of all Iraqis.

The Government also continues to adopt and implement other laws in various areas. We have taken practical steps to improve our people's living conditions, to increase salaries and pensions, to combat unemployment and to expand the efforts of the social welfare network. The Government is determined that next year will be dedicated to promoting the service sector in order to alleviate the hardships and suffering of our citizens.

We understand that these promising steps do not fulfil all our aspirations and that we have a long way to go until we achieve our goal of a secure, stable and prosperous Iraq. We hope that the international community will support Iraq and help it to achieve that noble goal.

We believe that security is an integrated system. A secure and stable Iraq will be in the best interests of the region and of the world as a whole. We have warned all countries in the region that the relentless flow of weapons, money and suicide bombers and the spreading of fatwas that incite hatred and murder will only spell disaster for the peoples of the region and the entire world.

After the Government of National Unity was formed, we took the initiative to improve Iraq's relationship with neighbouring countries. We also took

pains to make our common borders peaceful and economically prosperous areas. The foreign policy of the new Iraq is based on our permanent Constitution, which does not allow our land to be used against our neighbours and prohibits foreign interference in our internal affairs. Today, we feel optimistic that countries in the region are aware of the danger of the terrorist onslaught against Iraq and that a weak Iraq is not in their interests. A strong and democratic Iraq will be a guarantee of security and stability in the region.

Because of its new policies, Iraq has become a place for negotiations and dialogue between feuding regional and international entities. We will take steps to reinforce that positive role, adopting a policy of improving conditions, defusing crises and banishing the spectre of war and conflict from the region. We firmly believe that tension and instability undermine security not only in Iraq, but throughout the region and the world.

Iraq, which in recent decades has been a hotbed of tension in the region, is now qualified, by virtue of its material and human resources, to serve as a platform for regional and international economic cooperation. That will contribute to the establishment of an economic system that will produce development and prosperity for the peoples and countries of the region.

We also wish to express our sincere desire to establish the best possible relationship with the international community. We believe that Iraq must be open to all countries, developing relationships and benefiting from the experiences of other democracies.

As I stand before leaders and representatives of the world's nations, I must recall that the Iraqi people continue to pay the price for the reckless politics of the previous, fallen regime and to experience the consequences of international resolutions, especially those relating to its weapons programme and its invasion of the brotherly State of Kuwait. Those resolutions, which were exploited by the previous regime for political gain, have caused much damage to our infrastructure, service sector and education and health systems. Our people are looking to the international community for help in repairing that damage and lifting the heavy burdens of debt and reparation.

The Iraqi people will remember the countries that made sacrifices and stood alongside them in bringing down the dictator's regime. They will remember those who helped them during the transition to a democratic and pluralistic federal system. Moreover, they will always respect and appreciate the countries and Governments that support their political process and participate in the reconstruction process.

Our efforts, in partnership with the international community, to achieve economic progress and social justice culminated in success with the signing of the International Compact with Iraq and the implementation of its provisions. That document represents a new stage in the development of balanced relationships between Iraq and other Governments throughout the world. It is a point of departure in the building of a democratic, pluralistic, federal Iraq where all citizens are equal and will benefit from fair distribution of wealth after the burdens of debt, unemployment, and administrative and financial corruption left over from the days of the former regime have been lifted.

We hope that the countries concerned will comply with the provisions of the International Compact with Iraq. That will help the international community and encourage it to play its role in reconstruction and development and in supporting national reconciliation and the democratic experience.

Many of the region's problems and crises can be resolved through constructive and focused dialogue. In order to maintain peace and security, our region must abandon the path of war and adventure, which has led to increased harm and suffering for the people.

Within this framework, we call for recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people, for assistance to them in establishing an independent State, and for the return of occupied Arab lands in accordance with international resolutions. The elimination of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East will indeed guarantee a just and comprehensive peace.

We call for the intensification of national, Arab and international efforts to help Lebanon and its political authorities to transcend the state of division and to bar interference in its internal affairs so that Lebanon can regain its national unity and cohesiveness.

To forge partnerships and to achieve peace, stability and prosperity, we must bolster cooperation among all countries of the world and must work

together to attain the noble goals of the United Nations. This also necessitates ensuring equal and balanced relationships among States and developing a more fair and just global order by helping economically disadvantaged developing countries and reducing the development gap between poor and rich nations.

We support an active United Nations role in the international arena, peacefully resolving crises once it attains all the elements and support that it needs to play that important role. We call upon the United Nations to adopt peaceful initiatives that can help defuse conflicts, save people from the scourge of war and establish international security and stability. That will guarantee the rights and interests of all nations and will reinforce partnerships and cooperation among them. It will also provide the necessary environment for solving the problems and crises that face the world in a fair and just way.

Finally, on behalf of the Iraqi people, I wish to congratulate Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I also want to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who played an important role in the United Nations adoption of the International Compact with Iraq to help Iraq carry out its reform programme of political, economic and security reform. My deep appreciation goes also to all countries that signed the Compact.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nuri al-Maliki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, who will also speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Pérez Roque (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Never before have the real dangers awaiting the human species become so evident; never before have the violations of international law become so evident, as they increasingly jeopardize international peace and security; never before have inequality and exclusion become so evident, as they impact over two thirds of the population on our planet.

Putting an end to wastefulness and to the unbridled consumerism fostered by the large corporations and the power groups of a handful of developed countries — which throw money away at the cost of poverty and the perpetuation of underdevelopment in a vast periphery of poor countries where billions of people scramble to make a living — has become a key factor for the survival of mankind. The high-level meeting of this General Assembly held only two days ago emphasized the danger posed by the accelerated global warming that is already affecting us and by its effect on climate change. Action must be taken — and quickly. The developed countries have the moral duty and the historic responsibility to set the example and spearhead the effort.

On the other hand, several of our countries, always from the South, continue to fall prey to unacceptable acts of aggression by the ever-powerful, which are essentially driven by the insatiable hunger for strategic resources. The wars of conquest and the proclamation and implementation of doctrines based on pre-emptive wars — which do not exclude the use of nuclear weapons, even against non-nuclear States — and the repeated use of pretexts such as the alleged war on terror, the supposed promotion of democracy or so-called regime change in countries that are unilaterally labelled as rogue States are today the greatest and most serious threat to peace and security in the world.

Aggression and illegal occupation of countries, military intervention contrary to international law and the purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the bombing of civilians and torture continue to be daily practices. Under the false litany of freedom and democracy, an attempt is made to justify the pillaging of the natural resources in the third world and to control zones of increasing geo-strategic importance. That and no other is the imperial domination plan that the mightiest military superpower ever to exist intends to impose through blood and fire.

Far from behaving in international relations according to the principles of solidarity, social and international justice, equality and development for all, there is no hesitation at all in employing the practices of certifying countries, of imposing unilateral blockades and of threatening through aggression, blackmail and coercion. If a small country defends its right to independence, it is accused of being a rogue State; if a Power launches an attack against a country, it is said that it liberates them; a fighter against foreign aggression is a terrorist; an attacking soldier is a freedom fighter. That is the media war, the twisting of

truths, the tyranny of monolithic thinking in a globalized world.

Instead of moving towards general and complete disarmament — including nuclear disarmament, which has been an ongoing demand of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries for decades — what we see is the promotion of the arms race and the squandering of wealth on new weapons and arms systems that deplete the resources that the world needs to mitigate the effects of climate change and address the very serious problems stemming from poverty and marginalization.

An attempt is made to prevent, in a politicized and selective fashion, the implementation of the principle — already proclaimed in the Non-Proliferation Treaty — that nations have the right to the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Some countries are threatened with war and destruction while the aggressive ally is permitted to have hundreds of nuclear devices and is constantly helped to modernize them.

How much longer will it take and how many new victims will have to die before the hawks of war understand that weapons are useless in resolving the critical problems of humankind? On a day like today, it is worth recalling the words uttered by President Fidel Castro in this General Assembly in October 1979:

> "Let us say farewell to arms, and let us in a civilized manner dedicate ourselves to the most pressing problems of our times. This is the responsibility, this is the most sacred duty of the statesmen of all the world. Moreover, this is the basic premise for human survival." (*A/34/PV.31, para. 147*)

There has been no progress to date towards fulfilling the Millennium Goals and the decisions of the major United Nations conferences held over the past decade. Poverty has not decreased. Inequality among and within countries is on the rise. Drinking water is not accessible to 1.1 billion people; 2.6 billion lack health services; over 800 million are illiterate and 115 million children do not attend primary school; 850 million starve every day. One per cent of the world's richest people own 40 per cent of the wealth, while 50 per cent of the world's population has barely 1 per cent. All this is happening in a world that spends a trillion dollars on weapons and another trillion on advertising.

The nearly 1 billion people living in developed countries consume approximately half of all the energy, while 2 billion poor people are still not acquainted with electricity. Is that the world that they want us to accept? Is that, by any chance, the future that we should settle for? Are we entitled or not to fight to change that state of things? Should we or should we not fight to make a better world possible?

Why are such colossal resources squandered on the killing industry and not used to save lives? Why are schools not built instead of nuclear submarines, and hospitals instead of "smart" bombs? Why are vaccines not produced instead of armoured vehicles, and more food instead of more fighter jets? Why is there no momentum given to research to fight AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis instead of promoting the manufacture of anti-missile shields? Why is there no war waged against poverty instead of against the poor?

Despite the fact that only $150 billion is needed to meet the Millennium Goals, we hear the hypocritical assertion that there is no source from which to obtain the necessary financial resources. That is a lie. There is money in abundance; what is lacking is the political will, ethics and the real commitment of those who have to make a choice.

If they really want money to appear, let the commitment of setting aside 0.7 per cent of gross national product as official development assistance be met once and for all. That would require $141 billion over and above the current amounts. At the height of deceit, the donor countries are now auditing the cancellations of a debt that they know they will not be able to collect in order to artificially inflate their contributions. Let the foreign debt, which our countries have already paid more than once, be cancelled. That would make it possible to set aside for development the over $400 billion currently used to service a debt that does not cease to grow.

Let the Doha Round for development come to an end and let the $300 billion in agricultural subsidies for the developed countries be removed. That would make it possible to earmark that money to fight rural poverty and food insecurity and to ensure fair prices for the export products of the underdeveloped countries.

Let our right to development be recognized. Let our right to have access to markets, patents and technologies be guaranteed, for those are now the exclusive monopoly of the powerful. Let our countries

be helped in training professionals and scientists and let the brain drain stop.

The non-aligned countries need no alms; we need and demand justice. Let our rights to cultural diversity be respected, as well as our right to the preservation of our heritage, our symbols and our idiosyncrasies. That was the unanimous demand made in Tehran by the non-aligned countries at our ministerial meeting on human rights and cultural diversity.

The non-aligned countries want a more democratic and transparent United Nations in which the General Assembly, its most representative and democratic body, can truly implement the powers vested in it. We need a United Nations with a reformed Security Council, acting in conformity with the mandate granted to it by the Organization's Charter without infringing on the functions and prerogatives of other organs of the system. There must be a Security Council with an expanded membership in line with the current composition of the United Nations, where the underdeveloped countries are the majority. There must be a Security Council with a radical modification to its working methods in order to allow transparency and the access of all Member States to its deliberations.

We need a Human Rights Council that prevents the repetition of the serious mistakes made by the former Commission on Human Rights. The Council should enshrine in its practices the principle that human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. It should put an end to selectivity and double standards. The non-aligned countries will firmly oppose the devilish schemes of some mighty quarters that, frustrated as they are at failing to achieve their goals, are now attempting to reopen and call into question the agreement reached in the hard and difficult process of institution-building in the Council.

The non-aligned countries will not give up on defence of the precepts that underlie our movement. Among the nations, we will foster relations of friendship based on respect for the principles of sovereignty, equality of rights and the self-determination of peoples.

We will continue to defend the right of the grief-stricken and heroic people of Palestine to have their own State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We will continue to condemn the genocide committed against it. We will continue to proclaim the right of the people of Puerto Rico to sovereignty and to independence. The non-aligned countries account for nearly two thirds of the membership of the United Nations. Our demands will not be forgotten or our interests ignored.

This was supposed to be the end of my statement as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, the shameless and gross behaviour of the United States President in this Hall yesterday morning now forces me to utter a few remarks on Cuba's behalf.

With foul language and an arrogant tone, President Bush insulted and threatened some 10 countries. He gave orders in a firm and authoritarian fashion to the General Assembly, and with an officiousness never before seen in this Hall he dished out terms and judgments on a score of countries. It was an embarrassing show — the *delirium tremens* of the world's policeman, the intoxication of imperial power imbued with the mediocrity and cynicism of those who threaten to launch wars in which they know their lives are not at stake.

The President of the United States has no right to pass judgment on any other sovereign nation on this planet. Having powerful nuclear weapons offers no right whatsoever to tread upon the rights of the peoples of the other 191 countries that are represented here. And the determination and courage of peoples should not be underestimated when it comes to defending their rights. After all, what prevails is not the power of cannons but the fairness of the ideas for which you are fighting. The warmongering and menacing President should have already learned this by now: sovereign equality of States, not regime change; respect for sovereignty, not unilateral certifications of good behaviour; respect for international law, not illegal blockades and wars.

President Bush talked about democracy, but we all know that he is lying. He came into office through fraud and deceit. We would have been spared his presence yesterday and would have listened to President Albert Gore talking about climate change and the risks to our species. We also recall how he brazenly supported the coup d'état against the President and the constitution of Venezuela.

He talked about peace, but we know that he is lying. We remember well when he threatened 60 or more countries, which he called "dark corners of the world", saying that he would wipe them off the face of the Earth with pre-emptive surprise attacks. Bush is a strange warrior who, from the rearguard, sends the

young people of his country to kill and to die thousands of kilometres away.

He talked about human rights, but we know that he is lying. He is responsible for the death of 600,000 civilians in Iraq; he authorized tortures at the Guantánamo naval base and at Abu Ghraib; and he is an accessory to the kidnapping and disappearance of people, as well as to the secret flights and the clandestine prisons.

He talked about the fight against terrorism, but we know that he is lying. He has ensured complete impunity for the most abominable terrorist groups which, from Miami, have perpetrated horrendous crimes against the Cuban people. President Bush attacked the new Human Rights Council. He is bleeding from his wound; he is grunting his helplessness. He is haunted by the shamefulness that, during his term in office, the United States cannot even look forward to being a member because elections are through secret ballot. Cuba, on the other hand, was elected as a founding member of the Council with more than two thirds of the votes.

He talked about cooperation, development and prosperity for the rest of the world, but we all know that he is lying. He has been the most selfish and reckless politician we have ever seen. In a world that this year will bear witness to the death of 10 million children under the age of five through preventable diseases, his self-seeking and empty proposals of yesterday are but a sick joke.

President Bush has no moral authority or credibility to judge anyone. He should be held accountable to the world for his crimes. There is a limit to both arrogance and hypocrisy. There is a limit to lies and blackmail. Cuba rejects and condemns every one of the mendacious words uttered yesterday by the President of the United States.

Cuba appreciates the solidarity it has received from the General Assembly in its struggle against the blockade and the aggression that it has been forced to endure for nearly five decades. In particular, I thank the President of Nicaragua, Comrade Daniel Ortega, who is here in the Hall, for his kind words yesterday, and I thank all those who have spoken out for the rights and justice for the Cuban people. Cuba thanks all those who have supported its tenacious fight against terrorism and have raised their voice in favour of the release of five Cuban anti-terrorism fighters unjustly imprisoned in the United States.

Cuba will fight, along with all other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, in order to achieve a more just and democratic international order, in which our peoples can exercise their right to peace and development. We may be accused of being dreamers, but we are fighting with the conviction that today's dreams will be tomorrow's realities. We are fighting — and we will not stop fighting — with the conviction that even when there are individuals without decorum, there are always others who have in themselves the decorum of many and who bear within themselves an entire nations, as well as human dignity.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.